CYNARA

BY
H. M. HARWOOD
AND
R. GORE BROWNE

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CYNARA

A PLAY IN A PROLOGUE, THREE ACTS AND AN EPILOGUE

Adapted from "AN IMPERFECT LOVER"
A Novel by R. Gore Browne

BY

H. M. HARWOOD

AND

R. GORE BROWNE

"I have been faithful to thee,
Cynara, in my fashion."

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TO

GLADYS COOPER

AND

GERALD DU MAURIER

IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Clemency Warlock
Jim Warlock
Merton
Gorla Kentish
The Honourable John Tring
Joseph
An American
A French Girl
A Waiter
Milly Miles
Doris Lea
An Italian
Grace Fish
Alice Fish
Olive Day
Mrs. Day
Mr. Boot
Councillor Apted
Mrs. Apted
Mr. Carraway
A Maid
A Butler
A Police Inspector
A Coroner
A Police Sergeant
A Police Constable
Madame Ducette
Foreman of the Jury
An Aged Juror
A Woman Juror

Reporters, Jurors, Members of the Public.

LIST OF SCENES

PROLOGUE.—*The Balcony of a private suite in a Capri hotel. An August afternoon.*

ACT I: SCENE 1.—*Clemency Warlock's bedroom in Montagu Square. The evening of the 19th of the previous May.*

SCENE 2.—*A Restaurant in Soho. The same night.*

SCENE 3.—*The Ante-room of the Public Baths at Farmer's Green in North London. The afternoon of the 29th May.*

ACT II: SCENE 1.—*Doris Lea's flat at Farmer's Green. The evening of Derby Day, 4th June.*

SCENE 2.—*The garden of a Country Inn near London. The night of the 29th June.*

SCENE 3.—*Clemency Warlock's bedroom in Montagu Square. The night of the 5th July.*

SCENE 4.—*Kensington Gardens. The evening of the 7th July.*

SCENE 5.—*Jim Warlock's library at Montagu Square. The evening of the 10th July.*

ACT III.—*A Coroner's Court in North London. The morning of the 12th July.*

EPILOGUE.—*The Balcony of a private suite in a Capri hotel. The same August afternoon as the Prologue.*

First produced at the Playhouse Theatre, London, on Thursday, 26th June, 1930, with the following cast :

Clemency Warlock	Miss Gladys Cooper
Jim Warlock	Sir Gerald du Maurier
Merton	Miss Joan Carol
Gorla Kentish	Miss Ann Todd
The Honourable John Tring	Mr. Campbell Gullan
Joseph	Mr. George Desmond
An American	Mr. Robert Wilton
A French Girl	Miss Isla Bevan
A Waiter	Mr. Walter Tobias
Milly Miles	Miss Dorice Fordred
Doris Lea	Miss Celia Johnson
An Italian	Mr. Charles Koop
Grace Fish	Miss Joan Carol
Alice Fish	Miss Isla Bevan
Olive Day	Miss Gwendoline Hill
Mrs. Day	Miss Florence Harwood
Mr. Boot	Mr. Ernest Jay
Councillor Apted	Mr. Tom Woods
Mrs. Apted	Miss Joan Swinstead
Mr. Carraway	Mr. Walter Tobias
A Maid	Miss Isla Bevan
A Butler	Mr. A. Harding Steerman
A Police Inspector	Mr. Garrett Hollick
A Coroner	Mr. Ernest Jay
A Police Sergeant	Mr. A. Harding Steerman
A Police Constable	Mr. Carteret Maule
Madame Ducette	Miss Joan Swinstead
The Foreman of the Jury	Mr. Charles Koop
An Aged Juror	Mr. Walter Tobias
A Woman Juror	Miss Gwendoline Hill

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE

SCENE : *The Balcony of a private suite in a Capri hotel.*
TIME : *An August afternoon.*
A square of sunlight and blue sky is seen through an opening of stone.

[*On a long chair lies a woman*—CLEMENCY WARLOCK. *But for an occasional flick of her fly whisk you would think she was asleep. A man dressed in a pair of old grey flannels and a tennis shirt comes into view. In his hand are some letters. He sits on the stone balustrade of the terrace and lights a cigarette. He moves about restlessly, casting an occasional glance at the woman, but does not speak until he sees by her movements that she is awake. It might be a honeymoon couple in these idyllic surroundings. But something is wrong—there is a sense of strain. She talks naturally and pleasantly, perhaps a little too pleasantly, too considerately, and you get the impression that both are talking from fear of silence rather than because they have anything to say. They talk as one talks to the sick, as though afraid of uncovering a tender place. The man is* JIM WARLOCK.

JIM (*handing his wife a couple of letters*) : Had a sleep ?

CLEMENCY : I dozed. You ?

[*He shakes his head.*

How did you sleep last night ?

JIM : About the same. It's so hot.

CLEMENCY (*opening one of her letters*) : Are you sure you wouldn't like to move ? How about Switzerland ? Somewhere high up ?

JIM : More travelling ? No. And droves of people.

CLEMENCY : We could find a quiet place.

JIM : In August ? Of course if you want to. It's all one to me. Whatever you like.

CLEMENCY : No. I'm all right here. The bathing is lovely.

JIM : Are you sure you wouldn't like to go back ?

CLEMENCY : Back ?

JIM : To England. Gorla will want you to help her, won't she ? When is it ?

CLEMENCY : Not till October. She said she might join us here.

JIM : That would be nice for you.

CLEMENCY : Yes. You don't want to go back, do you ?

JIM : I ? Scarcely.

CLEMENCY (*who is reading her second letter*) : It's from Gorla. She's staying with Laura in Scotland. Oh ! She's broken it off !

JIM : What ? Why ?

CLEMENCY : She says he's beyond the pale.

JIM : A quarrel ? What about ?

[*There is a pause.*

Was it about me ?

CLEMENCY : They had a row. About her coming here.

JIM : He objected, did he ?

CLEMENCY (*reading*) : She says he has the mentality of St. Paul and the obstinacy of Balaam's ass.

JIM : Well, Balaam's ass was no fool. She mustn't do that you know. There's no reason for her to mess herself up about us. You must tell her. After all, he only thinks what everyone does, I'll write to her.

CLEMENCY : It won't do any good. Of course he *is* terribly stupid.

JIM : But—as you said—reliable. And—as we know—that's the great thing.

[*She allows this—his first burst of bitterness—to pass unnoticed.*

CLEMENCY : Who's your letter from ?

JIM (*turning it over*) : I don't know. (*He opens it without curiosity.*) It's old Tring.

CLEMENCY (*sharply*) : Oh ! What does he want ?

JIM : He wants to see me. About this Tanganyika business. It's *on*, he says.

CLEMENCY : They want you to go ?

JIM : I can try it if I want. It's damned good of him. I don't know a thing about it. I can't be any use to them. There's no reason why he should do it.

CLEMENCY : I think there is. He owes you something.

JIM : You think he's to blame ? Accessory before the fact ?

CLEMENCY : Well——

JIM : Oh, no. One can't get out of things like that. I don't want a whipping boy.

CLEMENCY : Do you want to go to this place ? What do they do ? Is it his property ?

JIM : Yes.—Coffee, tobacco, the fruits of the earth. I daresay it's a goodish sort of life. Besides—what else is there ?

CLEMENCY : You're sure that it's absolutely over—at home ? There wouldn't be any chance ?

JIM : None ; and I don't want to try. I don't want that kind of life any more. It was all right—with you—but——

CLEMENCY : You mean——?

JIM *(he leans over and just touches her hand)* : It won't work. You know that—it's not your fault. It was good of you to try.

CLEMENCY : You mean I can't help you ?

JIM : There's only one way to help me. And you can't do that. You've been terribly good. Don't think I'm not grateful. But it isn't any use.

CLEMENCY : Jim, if I could only understand——

JIM : I know.

CLEMENCY : Jim, if you could *tell me* something more ! You've never really told me. I have to imagine everything. And that's so much worse.

JIM : What do you want to know ? You heard all the facts.

CLEMENCY : Just that it happened. That's all. What happened to *you* ? That's what I don't know. Inside you, I mean. Mightn't it help you, too—to talk about it ?

JIM : Modern psychology ?

CLEMENCY : Yes—two thousand years or so. Don't, if you don't want to.

JIM : I don't mind.

CLEMENCY : Suppose I hadn't gone away ?

[*He shrugs his shoulders.*

When did it start ?

JIM : The night you left—in a way.

CLEMENCY : The same night ?

JIM : That began it. You remember when I came up to your room and found Merton packing ? You'd asked Tring to dine and hadn't put him off. I didn't want him—alone at home. We went to Soho, a place he knew. I thought I was in for a damned dull evening. (*Laughs.*) If you hadn't gone that particular night—that's what I keep wondering—what would have happened then ? Is the whole thing just chance ? Doesn't it matter *what* we do ourselves ? I dream of it every night——

[*The lights begin to fade.*

coming into your room, seeing Merton and the luggage and Gorla, I go through the whole business over and over. I wake up with that man's voice in my ears——

THE SCENE FADES OUT

ACT I

Scene 1

Scene : *Clemency Warlock's bedroom in Montague Square.*
Time : *The evening of the 19th of the previous May.*
The walls and curtains are silver grey, the furniture is in the painted Italian style. The bed, with a telephone beside it, stands at the back of the room between two doors, one leading to the passage, the other to a bathroom. A third door in the left hand wall admits to Jim's dressing-room. Clemency's dressing-table stands before the window on the right of the room. A sofa crosses the end of the bed, and on it lies an open suitcase. Merton, *Clemency's maid, is packing this with toilet necessaries from the dressing-table. Close by stand a packed suitcase and a face box.*

[Merton, *as the Curtain rises, goes into the bathroom, returning shortly with a sponge-bag. While she is off* Warlock *comes in quickly from the passage. He calls out, then looks round the room. His eyes fall, with bewilderment, on the luggage.*

Jim : Clemency ! (*As* Merton *returns.*) What's going on, Merton ? Where is Mrs. Warlock ?

Merton : Isn't she downstairs, sir ? (*She goes on packing.*)

Jim : No. What's the idea ?

Merton : Mrs. Warlock is catching the eight o'clock train from Fenchurch Street.

Jim : Fenchurch Street ?

Merton : For Tilbury, sir. She thought they'd try that way.

Jim : Oh ?—To where ?

Merton : To Paris. Didn't you get a telephone message, sir ?

Jim : No.

Merton : Mrs. Warlock tried. Perhaps you were in Court.

JIM : Well ?

MERTON : I believe they're going to Aix, sir.

JIM : Indeed—who are *they ?*

MERTON : Miss Gorla, sir.

JIM : Is *she* here ?

MERTON : She came after lunch, sir. It was all settled quite suddenly.

JIM : Suddenly ! I believe you.

[GORLA *comes in, ready for travelling. She is about twenty-two.*

GORLA : Oh, there you are !

JIM : Gorla, what *is* all this ? What's this nonsense about Aix ? What the hell do you mean by breaking up my home ?

GORLA : It's not *my* pigeon. It's Clemency. *I* don't want to go.

JIM : My dear Gorla ! You don't expect me to believe that Clemency has developed a passionate desire to go to Aix since this morning. Aix is for chronic complaints, not acute attacks. Come on, now. What's happened ? I suppose you're in another mess.

GORLA : Not so far as I'm concerned. I'm perfectly content to stay here, or to go to Paris—as I wanted to. It's she who wants me to go to Aix. (*She looks at* MERTON.)

JIM : Where *is* Clemency ?

GORLA : Downstairs. We've just come in.

JIM : Merton, see if you can find Mrs. Warlock.

[MERTON *goes.*

Well ?

GORLA : Well, I'm being saved—that's all.

JIM : Not *again ?*

GORLA : Clemency's so stuffy. I was only going away for a week-end—with Tristram.

JIM : Tristram ——

GORLA : Tristram Stone.

JIM : Who's he ?

GORLA : " Who's he ? " You'll make a splendid judge, Jim. " What's the Derby ? " " A race at Epsom, m'lud." You never go to films, I suppose ?

JIM : You don't mean that parachutist fellow ?

GORLA : Yes, I do.

JIM : You were going to Paris with him ? What for ?

[GORLA *grins.*

Why ? Where did you meet him ?

GORLA : In our pig-sties.

JIM : What d'you mean ? Not that it wasn't a thoroughly suitable place.

GORLA : Oh, clever ! Well, he happened to land there. He's doing a film called " The Price of Passion." He has to escape from the mad baronet, who's just crawling into the cockpit with a knife between his teeth. Tristram takes to his parachute—and lands in father's pig-sties. Well, that didn't start him in very well with the old man. The prize sow had just farrowed. She ate the lot. He was keeping her off with a spanner when I got there. I just fell in love with him.

JIM : I don't know where you get it from.

GORLA : No, Clemency would never do that.

JIM : I should hope not.

GORLA : Well, that's all right for you, isn't it ? Lucky I've got all the bad blood in the family. You like safety, don't you ?

JIM : Safety ! And this—acrobat— ! Does he want to marry you ?

GORLA : Oh, no. Nothing of that sort.

JIM : What *does* he want ?

GORLA : Well—Jim——

JIM : Why doesn't he want to ?

GORLA : Three reasons—a wife and twins.

JIM : Twins ! Good God ! Haven't you any sense of humour ?

GORLA : I don't think twins are funny. I haven't

got a music-hall mind. No one thought Romulus and Remus particularly funny. I'm awfully sorry, for your sake, Jim.

JIM : Sorry !

GORLA : Yes, really, I can see that it's a frightful bore for you, having your well-ordered existence broken into. It's entirely Clemency's fault—being stuffy and elder-sisterly, and all that. Like a fool I promised always to tell her whenever I felt like doing anything drastic—what *she* calls drastic. It would have been far less trouble for me to have gone off quietly—as I wanted ; but I'd promised, and so I rang her up. She made me come up here. And now I've promised to wait a month.

JIM : The man's obviously a swine.

GORLA : Perhaps I get my tastes from father.

JIM : Does *he* know ?

GORLA : Does he ever know anything ? Except pig ?

JIM : Why the devil can't you find someone decent and marry him ?

GORLA : I don't *want* to marry. Certainly not any one decent.

JIM : You might consider your relations. Give us a bit of peace.

GORLA : *Would* it ? You might have to arrange my divorce.

JIM : I said somebody *decent.*

GORLA : Yes, I know. It's Clemency's fault. I don't *want* her to agonise about my virtue. She will do it. If she'd just let me go and get it off my chest, I might come back a paragon—a female version of the Albert Memorial. You'd like that. Clemency has no romance about her.

JIM : Oh !

GORLA : Of course, she's a marvellous wife. She runs your life, like God and the solar system. Lovely meals—in cycles—like the planets. The Opera—Ascot—Cowes—the whole

system of organised desolation. Don't you ever want to put your foot through the works ?

JIM : I can't say that I do. You don't seem to allow for the fact that we're rather happy.

GORLA : Happy !

JIM : Well—*I* am—Clemency *says* she is.

GORLA : Terrible ! You seem to me to have nothing left to live for. No adventures to come. It's all so smug, so damnably successful.

JIM : You think there'd be some hope for us if I took the kitchen-maid to Paris for the week-end ?

GORLA : It might save your soul alive.

JIM : Youth's sovereign remedy for dying souls—illicit love.

GORLA : There you go ! Illicit ! Why illicit ? Your mind's a wilderness of law and order. So is Clemency's.

JIM : She has certainly shown no sign of wanting to run away with an acrobat.

GORLA : Oh, funny ! But I'm not such a fool as you think. I don't think love affairs are the only things in life.

JIM : But they seem to occupy a good deal of your attention.

GORLA : Only because other people make them difficult—butting in. And anyhow, sex *is* important.

JIM : Sex ! You say you "fell in love." What exactly does that mean ?

GORLA : Oh, my dear—I couldn't possibly explain to *you*.

JIM : Beyond my ken ?

GORLA : Yes, and I don't know why. You don't look like that a bit. If I didn't know you, I should have said you might be quite interesting.

JIM : I'm immensely gratified. You might even fall in love with me.

GORLA : Well, no one would do that now. The door's so obviously shut.

JIM : To keep out draughts ?

GORLA : To keep up a fug.

JIM : You don't think very highly of your sister's marriage ?

GORLA : Oh, I suppose you're happy, in your way.

JIM : Our way. Yes, a nice house, plenty of friends, enough money, and each other. You don't think that means very much ?

GORLA : I don't know what it means. Do *you ?*

JIM : I think so. We've been married seven years.

GORLA : I don't see how you *can* know. You've never tested it.

[CLEMENCY *comes in quickly.*

CLEMENCY : Oh, Jim ! There you are.

JIM : What does all this mean, Clemency ?

CLEMENCY : Has Gorla told you ?

JIM : About Aix ? Yes, she has.

CLEMENCY : You *don't* mind ?

JIM : Does that matter ? You seem to have settled it all.

CLEMENCY : I *tried* to ring you up. It had to be settled at once. You *do* see that, don't you ?

JIM : If you want to know what I really think—I think your sister's a damned nuisance, and that you're wasting your time. You'd far better let her go her own way.

GORLA : Hear, hear ! Let me "dree my weird "——

JIM : There a tribe somewhere where, before marriage, the man murders all his wife's relations. There's a lot to be said for it.

GORLA : It's also in the Bible, Clemency. Leaving all else, you should cleave only to Jim.

CLEMENCY : Are your things ready, Gorla ?

GORLA : I'm afraid I'm being the cause of a domestic quarrel. It's not my fault, Jim, I've told you that I disapprove of the whole idea. I'm simply going to please Clemency.

It won't make the least difference to my feelings for Tristram. If Clemency thinks all the waters of Aix can wash away love, she's wrong.

JIM : He'll probably have killed himself in four weeks. Let's hope so.

GORLA : That's disgusting. All the same, I never thought of that. I don't believe I'll go, after all.

CLEMENCY : You've promised.

GORLA : Well, I warn you if anything of that sort *does* happen, I'll throw myself into the arms of the nearest policeman. (*She goes.*)

CLEMENCY : Jim ! I'm *so* sorry.

JIM (*irritably*) : What's the use of it all ? Why can't she stay here ?

CLEMENCY : *He's* here.

JIM : He'll be here when she comes back.

CLEMENCY : Oh, my dear, she'll have forgotten all about him by then. I know Gorla. She'll collect someone out there in a few days.

JIM : Yes, some Dago Count—with triplets. Or a gigolo. You can't do this sort of thing for ever. If Gorla wants to behave like Pauline Bonaparte, I should let her. How you come to have a sister like that, I don't know. Besides, it's all talk. Probably she wouldn't do anything at all.

CLEMENCY : She would. She has natural bad taste in men. And she thinks this sort of thing romantic and interesting.

JIM : Yes, so she said. She thinks we're stuffy. It's so damned vulgar, too. If she ever really cared. But it's just curiosity. Like a puppy poking round a rubbish heap. And then tries to make out that it's superior vitality.

CLEMENCY : What *did* she say ? About *us ?*

JIM : Oh, we're beyond the pale. No life—no hope—no romance—sunk in slothful comfort and complacency.

CLEMENCY (*suddenly anxious*) : You're not dull, are you, Jim ?

JIM : I've never even thought about it.

CLEMENCY : I've never been away for four weeks before, have I ?

JIM : Never.

CLEMENCY : Perhaps it'll be a good thing for you, Jim. You must seize the opportunity.

JIM : Opportunity ? For what ?

CLEMENCY : Oh, I don't know. Whatever husbands do when they're left in London. One always hears about grass widowers.

JIM : *Wi*dows.

CLEMENCY : Isn't there any chance of your coming out ?

JIM : In term ? Not a hope. What time is this damned train ?

CLEMENCY : Eight o'clock.

JIM : Why Fenchurch Street ?

CLEMENCY : I wanted to go to-night. It's the best way.

JIM : Why won't to-morrow do ?

CLEMENCY : She'd change her mind. It'll be a filthy journey, but we'll get the day in Paris. Don't come to the station.

JIM : Oh, yes.

CLEMENCY : No, it'll make you cross. You hate stations. Besides, you're dining with John Tring, or rather he's dining with you.

JIM : Why is he ?

CLEMENCY : Don't you remember—he was coming here ? I didn't put him off. I thought he'd be company for you.

JIM : I don't want him.

CLEMENCY : Oh, yes. He's an amusing old thing, and he knew your father. You can try the 1908 Cockburn. It's quite ready.

JIM : I don't think I want to dine here alone with old Tring.

CLEMENCY : Well, go out somewhere. Be boys together. But Mrs. Woods has got quite a nice dinner for you.

JIM (*violently*) : I won't be pacified with food and drink —blast and damn !

[*He throws on the bed a package which he has been holding in his hand.*

CLEMENCY : What's that, Jim ? (*She picks it up.*) What's this ?

JIM : Nothing that matters.

[*She takes it up.*

CLEMENCY : It's a box. Why, it's from Dows ! What is it ? Can I open it ?

JIM (*sulkily*) : If you like.

CLEMENCY : Jim ! It's jade—oh ! For me ?

JIM : It *was*. You've forgotten, I suppose.

CLEMENCY : To-morrow ? Of course I hadn't. It's maddening. I cried a little.

JIM : I'd got the corner table at the Berkeley—the same one.

CLEMENCY (*holding him*) : It's too maddening !

JIM : Don't go. Let her take her chance.

CLEMENCY : No. We mustn't. I do feel responsible.

JIM : Rot ! Your father's responsible, if anyone is. Why doesn't he look after her ?

CLEMENCY : He would—if she were a sow.

JIM : I can fix this fellow all right. He won't trouble us.

CLEMENCY : That's no good. Gorla has to be diverted. You can't extinguish her.

JIM : Well—my God ! If she's like that —— !

CLEMENCY : You're fond of her, Jim. You don't want her to do something she'd be sorry for.

JIM : Would she ?

CLEMENCY : Of course. She doesn't understand, I feel I *must* help. I've been so lucky.

JIM : Lucky ?

CLEMENCY : With you.

JIM : Ordinary decency.

CLEMENCY : You think that, because you're like that.

JIM : Gorla thinks I'm a dull dog.

[*She laughs.*

I daresay. I've got work to do. I've no time to be temperamental. All this sex business. Tiresome nonsense. If she'd get a job of work——

[MERTON *comes in and begins to close the suitcase.*

CLEMENCY : Is it time to go, Merton ?

MERTON : Yes, madam. Holt thinks there may be a good deal of traffic.

CLEMENCY : Well, what about dinner ? What shall I say to Mrs. Woods ?

[MERTON *carries the suitcase out.*

JIM : We'll go out. I can't sit here and listen to Tring prosing.

CLEMENCY : He won't do *that*—but all right. I'll tell her. You'd better let him know if you're not dressing.

JIM : I'll ring him up. I suppose he wasn't coming before eight.

[GORLA *returns.*

CLEMENCY : Time we went, Gorla.

GORLA : I'm ready. (*To* JIM.) Still furious ? Are you sure it's safe to leave him, Clemency ? Suppose he goes bad on you ?

[CLEMENCY *laughs.*

I should hate anyone to trust me as much as that.

JIM : You needn't be afraid.

GORLA : Many men would be grateful.

JIM : I've no doubt.

GORLA : And you'll not even take to drink. "Oh, wise young man, how I do honour thee." Goodbye. (*She kisses him on the forehead, and goes.*)

CLEMENCY (*embracing him*) : Have a good time. Don't work too hard.

JIM : And keep out of draughts, and don't cross roads, and wash behind my ears—yes, yes, yes.

[*They move towards the door.*

CLEMENCY : And go out and see people.

JIM : I'm waiting till you've gone to ring up all the women I know.

CLEMENCY (*as they leave the room*) : Yes, do, darling.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Scene 2

Scene : *A restaurant in Soho.*
Time : *The same night.*
The restaurant is a small unpretentious place, and two tables are visible.

[*On the high-backed bench at one table sit* John Tring *and* Jim Warlock. *At the other, a young* American *and a* French Girl. *By the street door—which is at the back of the restaurant—stands a gambling machine of the usual type. Against the back wall stands a serving-table piled with fruit. Near the left-hand table is a hat-stand. The restaurant is run by its proprietor,* Joseph *—a genial, portly Italian—and a much harassed Italian* Waiter. *The couple at the left-hand table have finished their meal and have reached a stage of contented repletion conducive to affection, which they demonstrate with an entire lack of self-consciousness. The voices of other invisible customers are heard from the right of the stage.*

[Joseph *brings a dish of moules, steaming in an earthenware pot, to* Tring *and* Jim Warlock's *table.*

Tring : Ah, here are the moules.

[Tring *raises the pot to his nose.*

The touch of garlic ! That is the touch-stone of the cook—the use of garlic ! (*Helping* Jim.) Do I shock you ?

Jim : Not at all. Why ?

Tring : Why, indeed ? One should always have the courage of one's appetites, and Life is merciful, as one desire dies another is born ! The appetite may fail, but the palate persists, eh, Joseph ?

[*An invisible* Customer *calls.*

Customer : Waiter !—my bill !

Joseph : *Il conto per il Signore ! Enrico !*

Waiter (*crossing the stage*) : *Subito !*

AMERICAN (*to his companion*) : Say, this is a cute little joint you've brought me to, honey !

FRENCH GIRL : *Oui ?* You like it ?

AMERICAN : Sure, I do ! It's the cat's whiskers !

[*The* WAITER *comes in, and goes to their table.*

FRENCH GIRL : *Qu'est que ca veut dire ?*

AMERICAN (*to* WAITER) : Give me my check.

WAITER : *Comment ?*

FRENCH GIRL : *L'addition ! Qu'il est bête !*

AMERICAN : Say, honey, we'll go right home now !

FRENCH GIRL : Sure ! Naughty little boy !

TRING (*who has overheard this conversation*) : Hail Columbia ! Our boys in Europe !

[*The* AMERICAN *and the* FRENCH GIRL *get up to leave the restaurant.*

AMERICAN (*to* TRING) : Good-night to you, sir. (*As he reaches the door he says to* JOSEPH) : Say ! They're eating snails !

[*The couple go out into the street.*

TRING (*to* JIM) : How do you like this place ?

JIM : It's rather attractive. I've never heard of it.

TRING : No one has, yet. When they get known, up go prices and down goes cooking. Dress-clothes have been the death of dining. Never go anywhere where they wear white ties. That's a rule of life. Paris was killed by dress-clothes. Any uniform kills the natural appetite !

JIM : Yes. But dressing *does* something to one.

TRING : Yes ! It makes you feel like an English gentleman. There are hundreds of men every night propping up the British Empire with boiled shirts. It's our national emblem—the real White Ensign !

[*A* GIRL *who has finished her dinner comes from the invisible part of the restaurant and, crossing the stage, disappears into the street.*

(*As he fills* JIM's *glass.*) You like this, don't you ? I know you have a palate. Your wife told me. Wonderful woman that !

Knows what she's talking about. A woman who respects her stomach is above rubies !

[*Two* CUSTOMERS *come in from the street and cross the back of the stage to the invisible part of the restaurant.*

How long have you been married ?

JIM : Seven years.

TRING : Jacob and Leah. Then Rachel. Good ideas those fellows had ! They say our bodies are entirely renewed every seven years.

JIM : Mine feels much the same.

TRING : And now, what after this ?

JIM : Nothing for me. After all, if one eats moules, one eats them.

TRING : Well, a glass of sherry—— ! (*He calls.*) Joseph !

JOSEPH (*invisible*) : Sir ?

TRING : Two Tio Pepes.

JOSEPH (*appearing*) : Yes, sir.

[*He goes to get the sherry.*

TRING : Concentration is the secret of life. Never mix your wines or your women. Polygamy should be consecutive, not contemporaneous.

JIM : Speaking as one having authority ?

TRING : Oh, Lord, yes ! Change, variety, as often as you like, but not at the same time. No man can serve two mistresses.

[DORIS LEA *and* MILLY MILES *appear at the street door. After a moment's hesitation they cross the back of the stage to the invisible part of the restaurant.*

JIM : I always heard you were an authority on the subject. Do you remember all yours ?

TRING : " Dear dead women, with such hair, too, what's become of all the gold that used to hang and brush their bosoms ? "—What, indeed ! That's one thing you've missed.

JIM : What ?

TRING : Hair—long hair. There's a lot to be said for it. Not that I don't appreciate modern women——

[DORIS *and* MILLY *having failed to find a table, re-appear.*

MILLY : Come on, Doris.

[*She points to the table which the* AMERICAN *and the* FRENCH GIRL *have vacated. She and* DORIS *sit down, after hanging their coats on the hat-rack, which is already occupied by* JIM'S *and* TRING'S *hats.*

TRING : They play their hands well, better than ever they did. I'm a looker-on now, but I can see that.

[*He has seen* DORIS *and* MILLY.

Look at those two. Just shop-girls out of Shaftesbury Avenue, but see how they're turned out ! You wouldn't have seen that twenty years ago. They'd have been going home to high-tea with mother, and wearing feather boas !

JIM (*casually*) : The dark one's nice looking.

[*The* WAITER *has come in, and approached* DORIS *and* MILLY.

DORIS : I'll have a strawberry ice, please.

MILLY : And I'll have a vanilla.

WAITER : Anything to drink ?

DORIS : Stone ginger, please.

MILLY : I'll have a gin and tonic.

[*The* WAITER *goes.*

They say it's winning. If I get any more fat on the hips, I'll get the sack !

TRING (*to* JOSEPH, *who has brought the cherry*) : Poor Joseph ! What you have to put up with ! (*To* JIM.) We really ought to save them from themselves. Shall I ask them to join us ?

JIM : No, no, you can't do that ! They're respectable girls——

[*The* WAITER *brings the ices to the girls' table, and retires.*

TRING : Call no woman respectable until she's dead ! Death is the supreme achievement of respectability.

Temperance—modesty—chastity—Death ! England's contribution to modern morality. Shades of Drake and Hawkins !

JIM : Well, what's your cardinal virtue ?

TRING : Courage. That's what makes these girls admirable. There's nothing between them and poverty but the next week's wages. No security but their own health and energy,—and they're not afraid. They're gay and lighthearted because they're independent. Respectable ? By God, yes ! It would do you good to meet them !

[DORIS *is reaching over the back of the bench for something in her coat-pocket. She has to raise her voice to continue their conversation.*

DORIS : Well, what did you say ?

MILLY : I ticked him off all right ! Fancy doing a thing like that ! All the same, Bob's not a bad boy !

DORIS : I'd make a better out of a bolster and a bowler hat !

MILLY (*indicating* JIM'S *hat on the hat-rack*) : Well, there's a bowler hat, go on !

DORIS : Oh, I couldn't, not here !

MILLY (*handing her the hat*) : You're afraid !

DORIS : I'm not !

MILLY : Yes, you are !

DORIS : All right ! (*She puts the bowler on her head*) There !

TRING (*who has been watching*) : Charming !

DORIS (*hurriedly replacing the hat*) : Oh, is this yours ? I'm sorry——

JIM : Not at all !

DORIS : Whatever must you think of me !

JIM : I thought it suited you better than it does me.

DORIS (*to* MILLY) : There, Milly, you see——

MILLY : Well, what's the odds ?

TRING (*to* JOSEPH, *who is at the serving table*) : Joseph, I see a basket of peaches there——

JOSEPH (*bringing the basket forward*) : Beautiful peaches, Mr. Tring.

TRING : Ask the ladies if they will do us the honour of eating them.

[JOSEPH *takes the peaches to* DORIS'S *table.*

DORIS (*continuing her conversation to* MILLY) : They'll think I'm a nice sort !

JOSEPH (*offering the peaches*) : With the gentlemen's compliments !

MILLY : What ? (*She looks across at* TRING.) Oh !

DORIS : Oh, really, no, thank you very much——

TRING : Please do.

MILLY : Oh, we're much obliged I'm sure !

[*The* GIRLS *help themselves to peaches.* JOSEPH *takes the basket back to the serving table, and goes out.*

TRING : Won't you join us ? Unless, of course, you're expecting friends.

MILLY : No, but we're going directly.

JIM (*to* TRING) : We ought to be going, if we're to see a show.

TRING : A theatre after moules with garlic ? They wouldn't let us in !

[*To the* GIRLS.

Shall we compromise ? We'll join you——

DORIS : I don't mind.

TRING : Such enthusiasm is irresistible ! (*He crosses to their table and sits next to* MILLY.) I hope you share it ? We're immensely respectable ; my friend is a barrister.

MILLY : Oh, and what are you ?

TRING : I, my dear, am an old man. Come along, Warlock.

[JIM *reluctantly rises.*

Tring is my name. This is Mr. Warlock.

DORIS AND MILLY (*speaking together*) : Pleased to meet you. How do you do.

TRING : Your name I know,—Milly.

MILLY : Miss Miles to you.

[JOSEPH *comes back.*

This is my friend—Miss Doris Lea.

TRING : Coffee ?

MILLY : I don't mind.

TRING : Four coffees, Joseph, and—one moment—(*to* JIM)—they have got a '78 Armagnac here that's worth attention——

JIM : No, not for me.

TRING : Yes—yes ! Two Armagnacs, Joseph.

[JOSEPH *disappears.*

DORIS (*to* JIM) : Won't you sit down—unless you'd rather not ?

JIM (*taking the place opposite her*) : Not at all.

MILLY : We shan't eat you, you know.

TRING : Mr. Warlock has to acclimatise himself. These surroundings are strange to him.

DORIS : You don't come here regularly ?

JIM : This is the first time.

DORIS : Where do you go generally ?

JIM : Oh, different places. I'm usually at home, working.

TRING : Don't be afraid, Warlock. We'll make allowances for your plutocratic weaknesses.—He goes to the Ritz and the Berkeley, and so forth !

DORIS : Oh, those places ? Why do you come here, then ?

TRING : I brought him. We're celebrating his grass-widowerhood.

DORIS : Oh, you're married ?

[JIM *nods.*

Been married long ?

JIM : Seven years.

MILLY : Coming up for air soon, I suppose ?

TRING : No—he's not amphibious.

MILLY : What's that ? Left-handed ?

[JOSEPH *brings in the coffee and the brandy, and withdraws.*

TRING : Amphibians lead a double life—air and water. Mr. Warlock is definitely a deep-sea monster.

DORIS : You do go on, don't you ? I met another married man last week——

TRING : Yes,—it's epidemic.

DORIS : He said his wife didn't understand him.

MILLY : Said she was cold, I suppose ? They always say that.

DORIS : Does your wife understand you ?

JIM : I shouldn't wonder. I'm very easy.

DORIS : Any kids ?

JIM : No.

MILLY (*to* TRING) : She's soppy about kids !

TRING : A very laudable enthusiasm.

MILLY : That's all right for you, I daresay. A fat lot of good to girls like us !

DORIS : I wouldn't like to be married. Fancy telling anyone whatever you did ! I had a fiancé once, but I gave him the bird.

JIM : Why ?

DORIS : Oh, well, I hate meanness, don't you ? I had to buy my own chocolates at the Pictures ! And then there were parcels. If I asked him to carry a parcel he got ever so mad. I don't think a man who can't carry a parcel is much use, do you ?

JIM : I suppose not.

TRING : Obviously no good at all !

DORIS : You're a barrister, aren't you ? Where do you work ?

JIM : At Chambers and at the Law Courts.

DORIS (*to* MILLY) : Edith had a boy who was brought up at the Law Courts.

JIM : What for ?

DORIS : Oh, I don't know ! Edith said he was more sinned

against than sinning. He used to spend a lot of money. Took her to the Wimbledon Palais three nights a week. I think they put him in prison.

TRING : And who is Edith ?

MILLY : She works with us.

TRING : Near here, I suppose ?

DORIS : Madame Ducette's, do you know it ? It's just round the corner in Greek Street.

TRING : Dressmaker ?

MILLY : Paris models. Rue de la Paix at half-price—oh, boy !

TRING : And what do you do ? Mannequins ?

MILLY : And the rest. Not your swell kind, the sort that get their pictures in the papers. We've not been asked to sit for our pictures yet.

TRING : Something to look forward to !

MILLY : Academy next year, I shouldn't wonder !

TRING : And you live together ?

DORIS : Yes.

JIM : In London ?

DORIS : Well, not perhaps what you'd call London—Farmer's Green.

TRING : Farmer's Green ?

MILLY : Do you know it ?

TRING : I do, indeed.

DORIS : It's nice there. Only twenty-five minutes by Tube. (*To* JIM). Where do you live ?

JIM : Montagu Square.

DORIS : That's Baker Street, isn't it ? I don't know that part.

[JOSEPH *and an* ITALIAN CUSTOMER *come from the invisible part of the restaurant, and go to the gambling machine. The* ITALIAN CUSTOMER *tries his luck.*

JIM : Do your people live in London ?

DORIS : Oh, my people are dead.

JIM : I'm sorry——

DORIS : No, no sob stuff ! I didn't live with them. They were all right, you know, but not to live with !

TRING : That's true of so many of us.

MILLY : It's true of mothers. They're chronic, when you've got to live with them.

[*The noise of the gambling machine in operation is heard.*

What's he doing ?

TRING : Contravening the Gaming Act amongst other things.

[*The* ITALIAN CUSTOMER *has been unfortunate, and rattles the handle of the machine angrily.*

JOSEPH : *Basta ! Altrimenti si rompa !*

ITALIAN CUSTOMER : *È gia rotta, é c'éil diavolo dentro. Voglio il mio danaro !*

[JOSEPH *leads him, still protesting, to the door, and sees him out.*

MILLY (*amused at their vehemence*) : Why pay two-and-fourpence to go to the Talkies ?

TRING : Yes, why indeed ?—Shall we try our luck ?

[TRING *and* MILLY *go to the machine, and start to work it.*

DORIS (*to* JIM) : I lived with Aunt Maud for a bit, but she charged me eight shillings a week, and no latch-key. I ask you ! Milly and I get on pretty well.

MILLY (*to* TRING) : What do we do now ?

[DORIS *looks over the back of the bench at the machine.*

TRING : Now we find another shilling.

MILLY : This is a mug's game ! Let's try a yellow one.

TRING : Turn the handle——

[*There is a rush of coins.*

MILLY : Oh gosh ! Gosh, look what's happened ! Doris, look at this !

[*Her hands full of coins, she goes to* DORIS's *table.*

DORIS : What ever have you done ?

TRING : Twenty to one !

MILLY : Here you are.

TRING : No, it's yours.

MILLY : Why ? It's your shilling.

TRING : I put it in for you.

MILLY : Nothing doing ! What do you take me for ? Safety First is my Christian name !

TRING : At all events, let's spend it. Another peach ?

MILLY (*looking at her watch*) : Afraid we must be off now. Come on, Dorrie. (*She calls.*) Waiter, get me my bill, please.

[JOSEPH *comes in and indicates that* TRING *will pay.* Oh, thank you ! Very good of you, I'm sure. Come on, Dorrie—it's after nine. Lily's on at nine-fifteen.

JIM : You're going somewhere ?

DORIS : Lily Damita's at the Plaza. I like her, don't you ?

JIM : Lily Damita ?

DORIS : Perhaps you don't go to pictures ?

JIM : Oh, yes—in moderation.

DORIS : Like everything else ?

JIM : What does that mean ?

DORIS : Nothing.

TRING : Mayn't we come with you ?

DORIS : Sorry. There are two boys meeting us.

TRING : I'm sorry.

DORIS : Thanks all the same. Perhaps another time——

JIM : Well——

DORIS : Well, pleased to have met you——

TRING (*indicating the money*) : What am I to do with this ? You can't leave us with all this money ! We shall get into trouble—— !

DORIS : Reckless Reggie will keep you in order.

MILLY (*to* TRING) : Good-night. Thanks awfully.

TRING : Until we meet again——

MILLY : This year, next year, some time—never !

TRING : I'm serious. In fact, it's all arranged.

DORIS : Oh, where ?

TRING : At Farmer's Green.

MILLY : I should say so ! I can see you in Farmer's Green.

TRING : You will.

DORIS : Come on. He's pulling your leg !

TRING : No such luck. Will you bet ?

MILLY : Well, seeing's believing. Good-night !

[*They are standing in the doorway.*

JIM (*picking up Doris's bag*) : Miss Lea—your bag——

DORIS (*returning to table*) : Oh ! Thanks awfully——

JIM (*holding out his hand*) : Good-night—Doris.

DORIS : Good-night.

[DORIS *and* MILLY *leave the restaurant.* TRING *and* JIM *sit down at their table.*

JIM : What did you mean by that, about Farmer's Green ?

TRING : Well, it's a curious coincidence, but Farmer's Green is just what I was going to talk to you about.

JIM : Why ? What do you know about the place ?

TRING : You know my nephew, young Pinster ?

JIM : Yes.

TRING : He's my brother's heir. He has Parliamentary ambitions. He's nursing Farmer's Green and district. Well, being in a Nursing Home, he's handed me some of his dirty work. If there's one thing I abominate, it is speaking in public—and on a subject of this kind I simply can't risk it !

JIM : What is the subject ?

TRING : Baths. He's given a swimming-bath to the district. On Saturday week it's to be opened.

JIM : By you ?

TRING : That's his idea. It isn't mine !

JIM : Well, get someone else.

TRING : I'm going to. As a matter of fact, that's one of the reasons why you're dining with me.

JIM : I ?

TRING : You're accustomed to public speaking. It will be nothing to you.

JIM : No, thank you !

TRING : Yes, yes ! It'll be excellent training. You'll go into Parliament yourself one of these days !

JIM : I don't think so.

TRING : I thought as a barrister——

JIM : Oh, it's not as useful as it used to be.

TRING : Oh ? What a pity ! The more lawyers there are in Parliament, the better ! They're there to look after themselves, thank God, not other people ! None of this damned idealism. Now, as to Farmer's Green——

JIM : My dear fellow, I've not the slightest connection with the place——

TRING : What about our friends ?

JIM : Friends ?

TRING : What about Miss Doris Lea ?

[JIM *laughs.*

It's a bond, undoubtedly. Don't despise coincidence. An hour ago you'd never heard of Farmer's Green. Now, from two entirely different points of the compass it swims into your ken. Obviously you must get to know the place better. Probably our friends will be there. She will see you in your glory—and what a charming girl ! You had a success there !

JIM : Rot !

TRING : But she is charming, isn't she ? The other one's got the brains, but your Doris has emotion.

JIM : *My* Doris !

TRING : I speak comparatively. And what a lovely figure ! Don't you think so ?

JIM : I didn't notice.

TRING : I begin to fear that you are destined for the Bench !

JIM : She seemed intelligent, but it's difficult to talk to girls like that. There's no common ground—

TRING : No common ground ? God, Man ! there's the earth on which we live ! (*He calls.*) Joseph ! No common

ground ! A girl with a figure like that ? You're an amazing fellow !

[JOSEPH *appears.*

Joseph, two more Armagnacs.

JIM : No, no, no—— !

TRING : Yes, yes ! You really need it !

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Scene 3

Scene : *The Ante-room of the Public Baths at Farmer's Green in North London.*

Time : *Ten days later.*

Four doors which lead to dressing-rooms are seen on the right of the stage. On the left of the stage two swing-doors admit to the Swimming-bath, which is invisible to the audience when these doors are shut. From the front of the stage on either side two doors communicate with the rest of the building.

[*Three* Girls *who are entered for the Farmer's Green Beauty Competition are standing about in bathing suits as the Curtain Rises. A piano is playing out of sight, and the* Girls *are humming and dancing to the tune.* Mr. Boot, *the Organising Secretary, hurries in from the right.*

Boot : Now, ladies, please—inside, if you please ! The Chairman's just coming.

[*From the same door,* Mr. *and* Mrs. Apted, Mr. Carraway—*a dress reformer—and various members of the Committee appear.*

(*To* Apted.) This is where we wait, sir. They have arrived. I saw Mr. Tring getting out of the car.

[Boot *looks through the door through which the* Committee *have come.*

Here they are !

[Tring *and* Jim Warlock *enter by the door on the right.*

Apted : Mr. Tring, we are glad to see you. The wife——

Tring (*shaking hands*) : How d'you do ?

Apted : Let me see—(*making the introduction*)—our Committee——

Tring : Warlock, this is Mr. Councillor Apted, our Chairman to-day.

APTED : Mr. Warlock, welcome to Farmer's Green. (*To* MRS. APTED.) My dear, this is Mr. Warlock. (*To* JIM.) The wife !

JIM (*to* MRS. APTED) : I feel an absolute fraud, coming here, a complete stranger——

APTED : Not at all, not at all ! Never too old to make new friends !

BOOT : Very good of you, I'm sure, Mr. Warlock.

APTED : Mrs. Apted is going to sing to us presently, Mr. Warlock.

TRING : Charming !

JIM : What are you going to give us, Mrs. Apted ?

MRS. A. : I thought of beginning with " Good-bye, you Daffodils."

CARRAWAY : Why " Daffodils " ? What you want is an " Ode to the Human Body."

MRS. A. : I don't agree at all—(MR. APTED *checks her.*)

APTED : Well, Mr. Boot, are we ready ?

BOOT (*looking at watch*) : Mr. Warlock, I had better tell you the programme. First, the Chairman's opening remarks—very short ! Then Mrs. Apted gives us a song, just to give you time to feel your feet, as it were. Then there's the Beauty Parade—a purely local affair—but I don't think you'll find it too bad. Then you give your decision, and present the winning lady with the prize. It's a beautiful thing—a silver " aypern "—plate, of course, but a beautiful design.

JIM : Excuse me, but do you say I judge this competition ?

BOOT : Why, certainly——

JIM : But really, I don't feel that my judgment on such matters is of any value. I'm sure Mr. Tring is better qualified.

TRING : Not at all. I'm prejudiced in favour of the old-fashioned figure. Just your line, my boy—the Judgment of Paris—— !

MRS. A. : I am afraid there will be nothing of that kind, Mr. Tring.

BOOT : No, there's nothing Continental about Farmer's Green. You'll give some consideration to costume, of course, general " shick," and so on—— !

MRS. A. : Personally, Mr. Tring, I regret this competition. I feel it strikes a false note.

BOOT : It's the only thing that's going to get us into the papers. We want publicity !

TRING : It will undoubtedly help to increase the popularity of Farmer's Green !

JIM (*to* BOOT) : If you could give me a few details—local colour, so to speak ! I'm accustomed to speak to a brief.

BOOT : I'll tell you what I'll do, old man, I'll get them started. You needn't be in for the music ; wait here. (*To* APTED.) I'll bring him in when the music's over ! Now then, Chairman first, then Mrs. Apted.

[*He ushers them through the swing-doors.* CARRAWAY *is continuing his conversation with* TRING *as he crosses to the swing-doors.*

CARRAWAY : The Germans are the only people to revive the Greek ideal. When I was in Regensee last summer the beach was simply covered with people. Healthy, natural animals without a rag on—men and women.

TRING : Do you mean nothing at all ?

CARRAWAY : Of course some of them wore hats for the sun——

TRING (*as they disappear through the doors*) : Where did you say this place was, sir ?

[*From one of the changing-rooms,* DORIS LEA *appears in a bathing-dress covered by a wrap. She sees* JIM, *whose back is turned to her.*

DORIS : Oh, I'm sorry ! I thought they had all gone !

[JIM *turns.*

Why, it's Mr. Warlock !

JIM : Miss Lea !—it is Miss Lea ?

DORIS : That's right.

JIM : I wasn't sure——

DORIS : Whatever are you doing here ?

JIM : You may well ask ! I'm here under protest ! I was dragged here to open the Baths. Now I've got to judge an infernal Beauty Competition !

DORIS : I'm part of it. Don't laugh !

JIM : You're in the Competition ?

DORIS : Did you think I was going to give a diving exhibition ? Do you like my dress ? (*She opens her wrap.*) I do hope you'll give me the prize ! Will you ?

JIM : You mustn't bribe me !

DORIS : I wish I could !

[MILLY *comes out of another changing-room.*

Milly, here's Mr. Warlock. He's going to give me the prize !

JIM : Now, none of that ! (*To* MILLY.) How d'you do ?

MILLY : Nicely, thank you. This is an unexpected pleasure.

JIM : Of course, I remember, you said you lived here ! This makes my position worse than ever !

MILLY : Well, I shan't trouble you much ! I'm not expecting any bouquets this journey. I shouldn't be here, except to hold her hand. If they'd let me keep this on—(*indicating her wrap*)—I might get away with it !

[BOOT *returns through the swing-doors.*

BOOT : Now, Mr. Warlock, at your service ! You want to know something about Farmer's Green ? Well, I'm the man to tell you. I came here in nineteen-thirteen. I lived just where the Tube Station is now. It was green fields all round and two miles to the station. There was a bus every twenty minutes. Now there's a bus to Charing Cross every four minutes, and a train every three ! There's a population

of twelve thousand, and half of them have got their own telephone ; and there are two thousand radio sets. We have eleven churches and chapels, including Christian Science ; and three Cinemas, a social hall, a tennis club—and now this Bath ! Mind and body all provided for !

[*He leads* JIM *out of sight to the left of the stage.*

Have a look from this window, old man ! Ten years ago it looked on open country, just bare fields. Now, nothing but houses. You might be in the middle of London !

DORIS (*to* MILLY) : Fancy him being here !

MILLY (*significantly*) : Fancy !

DORIS : Judging, too !

MILLY : Well, that'll give you a running start.

DORIS : I don't know, I don't think he likes me much. I expect he's a lovely speaker.

MILLY : I shouldn't wonder. It's his business. Don't you get soppy, young Doris !

DORIS : I'm not soppy, but I think he's nice.

MILLY (*as she goes into her changing-room*) : Is his wife here ?

DORIS (*carelessly*) : I don't know. I don't suppose so.

MILLY : Neither do I. I like them single, myself.

[*Both* GIRLS *disappear into their changing-rooms.* BOOT *and* JIM *come back.*

BOOT : Yes, I've travelled a bit, Mr. Warlock, been to Paris, the Boulevards and all that, but I'd rather live in Farmer's Green, honest, I would !

[*He opens the swing-door. Music of* " *Good-bye you Daffodils !* " *is audible*

She's just finishing—working up for her climax !

MRS. APTED'S VOICE :

" Good-bye you Daffodils,
It's nearly Tulip Time.
Now the Almond Blossom spills
Its petals so sublime.

Ring your dancing, golden Bells
In just a passing sigh.
Tenderest of all farewells,
Daffodils, good-bye!" (Applause.)

BOOT: We'll go in now.

[BOOT *and* JIM *pass through the swing-doors out of sight.* OLIVE DAY, *followed by* MRS. DAY, *her mother, comes out of another changing-room.*

MRS. D.: Now, whatever you do, dearie, don't let your smile go hard. Keep the lips moist.

OLIVE: Oh, leave me alone, ma, do!

MRS. D.: I know that curl won't stay! (MRS. DAY *wets her finger and applies it to the threatened curl.*)

OLIVE: Oh, don't fuss so! I'm sure I don't care.

MRS. D.: I only want you to look your best, dearie. There's none of them to touch you when you make the best of yourself.

[GRACE FISH *enters from another changing-room.* DORIS *and* MILLY *appear at the doorways of their rooms.*

GRACE: Hullo, Doris! Aren't they going to begin? It's as cold as be-damned here! If I get goose-flesh I'm finished!

[ALICE, GRACE'S *younger sister, follows her from the compartment.*

Where's the mirror, Alice? (*She looks in it.*) I don't know why I'm here at all!

MILLY: Well, you're the best judge!

GRACE: I'd much rather have gone to the Pictures with my boy. He wasn't half sick! He doesn't like the idea of my doing this at all.

DORIS: Why?

GRACE: He doesn't think it's nice, before all these people. Nonsense, of course, but he's like that. Over-refined, I call it.

MILLY: Aren't you lucky?

[BOOT *comes through the swing-doors.*

OLIVE : I'm not going first—— !

MILLY : I didn't hear anyone ask you.

BOOT : Now then, ladies, peignoirs off, if you please. Who goes first ? It doesn't make any difference. You'll all get a fair chance.

[*They all hang back.*

MILLY : I'll go. If they survive that you'll be all right ! Where do I go ?

[MR. CARRAWAY *opens the swing doors. A piano playing the "March of the Men of Harlech" is heard.*

CARRAWAY : We're ready, Mr. Boot.

BOOT (*to* MILLY) : Keep left, along the edge of the bath, and line up at the end. You'll be in the middle, next to the first girl at the other side.

[*He puts his arm round* MILLY'S *waist as he escorts her to the swing-doors.*

MILLY : Steady on, Cuthbert !

BOOT : Miss Fish, you next, then Miss Day. What's he playing now ?

MRS. D. : "The Last Rose of Summer."

BOOT : I told him something sprightly ! Now, Miss Miles——

[MILLY *disappears through the swing-doors,* GRACE FISH *hurries after her.*

Not too quick, give the girl a chance ! Now then——

[GRACE *follows* MILLY *through the doors.*

MRS. D. (*to* OLIVE) : Keep your stomach in, dearie, and walk easy from the hips !

[OLIVE *follows the others through the doors.*

BOOT : Now, Miss Lea—— ! (*As* DORIS *passes him.*) The money's yours, hands down ! (*As* DORIS *goes through the doors he says to* MRS. DAY) : That's the winner !

MRS. D. : A deal too thin, to my mind !

[BOOT *follows the procession out of sight.* ALICE *watches the display through the swing-doors and* MRS. DAY *tidies up the wraps that have been discarded.*

In my day a man wouldn't have turned round to look at a girl like that !

ALICE : She's awfully elegant !

MRS. D. : Huh ! Just a fashion ! It's against human nature, and I know what I'm talking about. I was in the bar before I married Mr. Day. Believe me, what you don't learn of human nature in the bar isn't worth knowing ! There was two of us in the bar—me and another girl. She was thin, just like that. I wasn't fat, exactly—just a nice armful, like Olive—but when it came to selling beer she wasn't in it with me. Round me like flies, they were, and she not selling a drink perhaps for ten minutes !

ALICE (*looking through the doors*) : Mrs. Day, he's going to choose !

MRS. D. (*going to the doorway*) : There she goes, standing with her feet together ! I've told her a dozen times to keep one leg behind the other ! (*She shouts.*) Olive ! Well, it's too late now !

BOOT (*out of sight*) : Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Warlock will now tell us the name of the lady on whom his choice has fallen.

JIM (*out of sight*) : With so much beauty, it is difficult to judge, but I award the prize to the young lady on the extreme right, in the black and green dress.

BOOT : The winner of the competition is Miss Doris Lea !

[*Applause from the invisible crowd.*

MRS. D. : Well, there's no accounting for taste !

BOOT (*out of sight*) : Will Miss Lea please come forward ?

A VOICE : Mind the rail !

[*There is a crash of falling chairs.*

MRS. D. : She's fallen down !

[*She hurries through the swing-doors, followed by* ALICE.

BOOT (*out of sight*) : Keep your seats, please !—Are you hurt ?

JIM (*out of sight*) : Here—lean on me !

BOOT (*out of sight*) : This way, Mr. Warlock !

[BOOT *and* CARRAWAY *hold the doors open, and* JIM *appears, supporting* DORIS, *followed by members of the crowd, who stand in the doorway.*

JIM : Take it easy. Steady !

BOOT : Mr. Warlock, you will be coming back in a minute ?

JIM : All right.

DORIS : I can't think how I came to do such a thing !

[JIM *sits her on a bench against the wall, and kneels to examine the injury.*

JIM : Let's look. Move your foot. Nothing broken, I think.

DORIS : It's nothing, really.

[GRACE FISH *comes through the swing doors.*

GRACE : Some people never seem to get enough attention !

[*She disappears into her changing-room.*

JIM : No, nothing broken. Does it hurt much ?

DORIS : No, not much. I fell over the bar—and I haven't got my prize after all !

JIM : They'll bring it.

DORIS : But I wanted you to give it me !

JIM : So I will. I'll bring it when I come back !

[*He moves towards the doors.* MRS. DAY *and* OLIVE *come through them.*

MRS. D. (to OLIVE) : Did you ever ! If you'd only remembered not to put your feet together !

OLIVE : What does it matter ? It's a bum show, anyway !

[*They go into their changing-room.*

DORIS : I ought to thank you——

JIM : No, I couldn't help myself. It was a walk-over.

DORIS : Was it really ? I'm glad !

[MILLY *comes through the swing-doors.*

MILLY : Well, of all the mutts ! Whatever have you done ? Can you stand on it ?

JIM : It's not bad—just a sprain.

[MILLY *disappears into her compartment.*

(*To* DORIS.) How are you going to get home ? Where do you live ?

DORIS : About a mile.

JIM : How did you come ?

DORIS : Bike.

JIM : You can't do that.

DORIS : I'll get someone to give me a pillion.

JIM : With that foot—— ?

[TRING *appears in the doorway.*

TRING : I hope she isn't badly hurt ?

JIM : No. But I'm wondering how she is going to get home.

TRING : That's easy. Take her in your car. I'll go by Tube.

DORIS : Oh, no, I couldn't.

TRING : Yes, yes, certainly ! Beauty in distress.

JIM : We couldn't all get in ?

TRING : Not with the epergne. You mustn't leave that behind !

[MILLY *appears in her doorway.*

MILLY : All right, Mr. Warlock, I'll get a taxi.

JIM : That's all right. (*To* DORIS.) I'll drive you home. You get your clothes on. I shan't be long.

DORIS : Thanks ever so. It is kind of you——

[BOOT *appears at the swing-doors.*

BOOT : We're waiting for you, Mr. Warlock.

[JIM *and* TRING *follow him out of sight.*

MILLY : Dorrie, we don't want to bother him. I'll get a taxi.

DORIS : But you're meeting Fred at five.

MILLY : He can wait.

DORIS : No, no—why should you ? I shall be all right.

MILLY : And what about the stairs ?

DORIS : I daresay Mr. Warlock will help me.

MILLY : I daresay he will. Is the old man going ?

DORIS : No, it's a two-seater. I saw it come up. It's

lovely—black and yellow. I do think it's kind of him!

MILLY: Kind of him? Soppy little fool! I know his sort.

DORIS: I don't know what you mean! He said I really won. He said he couldn't help himself!

MILLY (*gloomily*): I shouldn't wonder. They often can't.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

(The lyric in this scene was kindly written by Mr. Noel Coward, to whom the authors hereby tender thanks.)

ACT II

ACT II

Scene 1

Scene : *Doris Lea's flat at Farmer's Green.*
Time : *The Evening of Derby Day, 4th June.*
The furnishing and decoration are nondescript. The room is neither very tidy nor very comfortable. It is in darkness except for the passage light, which shows through a glass transome over the door in the back wall. There is a window beside this door and a bedroom door on the left.

[*A key is heard turning in the street door and then voices in the passage. The door at the back opens.*

Doris : Wait a minute.

[*She turns on the light, and* Jim *is seen standing in the doorway. He carries field glasses.*

Jim : Ah, no one in.

Doris : Who did you expect ?

Jim : I expected Milly, with a club. She won't love me, losing her like that.

Doris : You couldn't help it. That crowd ! She'll be all right. Mr. Tring will look after her.

Jim : I'm not so sure. Nor am I sure that she wants to be looked after by Tring. I'm not popular with her as it is.

Doris : What ?

Jim : She talked to me like a Dutch uncle to-day.

Doris : What about ?

Jim : You. Warning me off.

Doris : Cheek. I can look after myself. We've had a lovely day, haven't we ?

Jim : It wasn't so lovely for that old bookmaker. I never heard such language. (*He pulls out a bundle of notes.*) Where shall I put this ?

Doris : That's not mine. I only said a shilling.

Jim : Nonsense. The whole idea was yours. I should never have backed the horse. I'd never heard of it.

DORIS : Neither had I. D'you know why I backed it ?

JIM : Why ?

DORIS : Because it was Number Nineteen.

JIM : Oh ?

DORIS : That was the day we met at the restaurant, the nineteenth.

JIM : Good heavens ! "Such great events from little causes spring." And that's what we risked our money on !

DORIS : Your money. I felt it must be a lucky number.

JIM : Did you ?

DORIS : I think you might say so, too.

JIM : The gipsy told you that you were going to be lucky.

DORIS : Happy, she said.

JIM : Isn't it the same thing ?

DORIS : No. (*She touches the notes.*) This isn't happiness. This is just—of course, it's nice. I've never had so much money before. But it's not happiness. Oh ! I hope she didn't mean that.

JIM : Well, many people would be content with a forty to one winner at their first Derby.

DORIS : I wish you had let her do you. Why didn't you ?

JIM : I did once. It was rather disastrous.

DORIS : Why ? When was it ?

JIM : Many years ago. That was at the Derby. I was with most respectable relations. The old gipsy was drunk. She let herself go a bit. She was eloquent about my habits.

DORIS : What habits ?

JIM : Well—my attitude towards women. She was embarrassingly frank on the subject. My aunt went to her grave believing me to be an English Rasputin.

DORIS : And was she right, the old gipsy ?

JIM : Well, I've not been in any serious trouble so far.

DORIS (*with a trace of acidity*) : No, I expect not. You're one of the careful kind, aren't you ?

JIM (*ignoring this*) : Well, I must trot. You must be tired. What a day !

DORIS : I'm not tired. You don't get tired when you're enjoying yourself.

JIM : You have enjoyed yourself ?

DORIS : I've never had a day like this. You've enjoyed it, haven't you ?

JIM : Immensely. Especially the last part.

DORIS : The part with me ? Alone, I mean ?

JIM : As you say.

DORIS : Is that true ?

JIM : Of course. Haven't I seemed to enjoy it ?

DORIS : Yes—but I'm never sure that you mean what you say.

JIM : What an idea ! Well, *someone* will be tired soon—my taxi-driver !

DORIS (*starts*) : You haven't kept him ? Oh, why ?

JIM : Well——

DORIS : Oh, do send him away. It's awful thinking of him there. Ticking up threepences.

JIM : A waiting taxi is a certificate of character—if it doesn't wait too long.

DORIS : Do send him away. The Tube's quite close.

JIM : If I send him away now, he'll form the worst possible opinion of us.

DORIS : I should worry. A taxi-man ! Last time you came you wouldn't stay. When you brought me back from the baths. I suppose this seems awful to you.

JIM : How " awful " ?

DORIS : Uncomfortable—sordid.

JIM : It's charming.

DORIS : No, it's not. I hate it. But we can't do much with it. We've no time.

JIM : I think it's very comfortable.

DORIS : I shan't believe that unless you stay a bit.

JIM : And what about Milly if she finds me here ?

DORIS : You've got Milly on the brain. I believe you're afraid of her.

JIM : I am. She's very fierce, and she's very fond of you. She thinks herself responsible.

DORIS : Pooh ! I can look after myself.

JIM : Can you ?

DORIS : Well, I haven't had to, particularly, to-night, have I ?

JIM (*bluntly*) : You mean I haven't tried to kiss you ?

DORIS : You probably haven't wanted to.

JIM : I didn't want to spoil it. We've had such a good day.

DORIS : Of course, if that's how you feel about it——

JIM : No, but—if I did that, Milly would be right.

DORIS : I think it's a pity we lost her, if you think so much of her opinion.

JIM : Now you're being thoroughly naughty. It isn't that I don't want to.

DORIS : Well, *how* does one know ?

JIM : Didn't I give you the prize for being the prettiest girl in Farmer's Green ? Where is it, by the way ?

DORIS (*pointing to bedroom*) : In there. Do you want to see it ?

JIM : Heavens, no !

DORIS : It is rather awful, but I like it because—— (*She hesitates.*) Did you really give it to me because you thought I was the nicest ?

JIM : I did indeed.

DORIS : What did you especially like about me ?

JIM : That would take a long time to tell.

DORIS : Then you must send away the taxi. Oh, do ! You can have a drink. I know there's some whisky somewhere. You've heaps of time. The Tube runs till twelve o'clock—please !

JIM : Well, ten minutes, but I warn you, it'll create a bad impression.

[*He goes. She looks for, and finds, some glasses and the whisky, but no soda. As she puts them on the sideboard she sees herself in the mirror above it, looks at herself disapprovingly, and goes quickly into the bedroom, pulling off her hat.* JIM *returns.*

I told you so.

DORIS (*from the bedroom*) : What ?

JIM : He winked.

[*She laughs.*

Yes, that's all very well, but what's Milly going to say ?

DORIS (*appearing at the door*) : Nothing, because she won't know. She's not coming back to-night. She's sleeping at her mother's.

JIM (*seriously*) : I say—why didn't you tell me ?

DORIS : Why ? It doesn't matter, does it ? So now, you've got nothing to be afraid of. I say, do you mind water ? I can't find any soda.

JIM : I don't want a drink.

DORIS : Oh, yes !

JIM : Well, just a spot.

[*She gives him a drink, and fills a glass for herself.*

DORIS : Well, here's how !

[*He takes a sip mechanically, but his thoughts are elsewhere.*

You're terribly serious. What's the matter ? Why don't you sit down ?

[*He does so. She comes and sits at the other end of a small sofa.*

Well, now you can tell me !

JIM : What ?

DORIS : What you liked about me.

JIM : Everything.

DORIS : That means nothing. (*Pause.*) Perhaps you'd remember if you looked at me.

[*But he doesn't, and after a moment she jumps up, furious.*

Oh, God ! What's the matter with you ? Do you think I've got the plague ?

JIM : Doris !

DORIS : If that's how you feel about it !—I don't know why you came after me at all.

JIM : Came after you ! Doris ? I didn't.

DORIS : Oh. Then why did you let me know where you'd be to-day ? Didn't you expect me to come ?

JIM : I ? I never let you know.

DORIS : *He* did. Tring. It's the same.

JIM : Tring told you we should be there ?

DORIS : Of course. How d'you suppose we'd have found you ? Why should we have come ? Do you mean you didn't know ?

JIM : Not a thing. The old scoundrel ! Well, I'm damned ! What's the matter, Doris ?

DORIS : Nothing. You had better go, hadn't you ? Here's your hat.

[*She picks up the money off the table.*

Here.

JIM : No, no. That's yours.

DORIS : It certainly isn't.

JIM : It certainly is.

[*She tries to thrust it into his pocket. He resists, holding her wrist, and she suddenly collapses.*

Doris ! You're crying. What is it ?

DORIS : It's all spoilt.

JIM : What's spoilt ?

DORIS : Everything. I thought you'd planned it all. I thought you'd meant me to come. That you wanted me.

JIM : I did want you. If I'd thought of it——

DORIS (*shaking her head*) : No, no. It's not the same. You must have hated seeing us there. Such a bore for you.

JIM : Damned nonsense ! (*He shakes her.*)

DORIS : I am so ashamed.

JIM : For God's sake, be sensible, I *didn't* know you were coming. I never thought about it. God knows why Tring did it. But I'm damned glad he did. I was delighted when you turned up, and I've had the best day I've ever had in my life. There ! (*He kisses her, not passionately, but he holds her still in his arms.*) Now I'm off.

DORIS (*not moving*) : Not yet.

JIM : Yes, yes.

DORIS (*under her breath*) : Just a minute. Only a minute. (*She looks up at him.*) It hasn't spoilt it, has it ?

[*He shakes his head. She lifts herself towards him, and kisses him. He gently disengages himself.*

JIM : Doris, I must go.

[*She doesn't move.*

You *must* let me go.

DORIS : Do you *want* to ?

JIM : I *must*. Can't you see ? It isn't fair.

DORIS : To your wife ?

JIM : To you. I'm no good to you. It couldn't last.

DORIS : That's my look out.

JIM : No, it isn't. It's mine. You don't know what you're doing. I do.

DORIS : How do you know I don't ?

JIM : Of course you don't.

DORIS (*slowly*) : You mean—you're afraid—of being the first ? (*Pause.*) You needn't be afraid. You wouldn't be.

JIM : What !

DORIS : I suppose I'm a fool to tell you. It was years ago. I was seventeen. I'd just started work. There was a man, not very old—about thirty. He used to take me out to restaurants and theatres—stalls. He was quite rich. There didn't seem any harm in it. Then one day he told me what he wanted. I'd never dreamt of anything like that. I *was* green then, if you like. He'd always been so respectful. I told him I couldn't, really, and then he cried.

JIM : And you were sorry for him ?

DORIS : I thought perhaps it didn't matter very much. I don't think it does. Do you ?—If you're fond of anyone ? But you've got to be—both of you—fond. That's what I found. I felt dreadful after. I thought I'd have a baby, and have to tell Aunt Maud. I was living with her then.

JIM : And what happened—to him ?

DORIS : Oh, I told him I couldn't ever see him again. I couldn't have, either. So, you see, I'm quite a bad girl, really. I suppose I oughtn't to have told you. You won't like me any more now.

JIM : My dear !

DORIS : I expect you hate me for it. Milly says you shouldn't ever tell men things like that.

JIM : And since then, haven't you met anyone—anyone you cared for ?

DORIS : No. There are boys I go out with, to dances and pictures, but I don't really care for them. They're common really. I haven't let anyone kiss me since I was engaged. I haven't wanted to. So, you see, you needn't be so particular. I've always dreamed of someone like you. (*Low.*) And you needn't be afraid. I shouldn't ever be a nuisance. I'd go away whenever you told me. You *do* like me, don't you ?

JIM : Too much.

DORIS : No, no. Not too much. You mustn't say that. You mustn't.

[He suddenly takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately. There is a long pause, and she draws her head back and looks at him.

Darling ! Darling !

THE SCENE FADES OUT

Scene 2

Scene : *The garden of a country inn near London.*
Time : *The night of the 29th June.*
Under plane trees stands a small table lit by a single lamp hanging from a tree. The remains of dinner things are on the table. All round is darkness, except for a light or two in the hotel some fifty yards away.

[Doris *and* Jim *are seated at the table. He is smoking a pipe.*

Jim : Not cold ?

Doris : No. (*She looks at him and rises.*)

Jim : Where are you going ?

Doris : To get your coat.

Jim : No, no.

Doris : Yes ; there is a little wind.

Jim : And I'm such a delicate plant.

Doris : You mustn't catch cold. Supposing you got ill.

Jim : Terrible.

Doris : It would be. I couldn't come and nurse you, could I ?

Jim : Well, hardly.

Doris : I mightn't even know. Why couldn't I come ?

Jim : Well——

Doris : You *would* let me know ? (*Rises again.*) Do let me get your coat.

Jim : Sit down. If I want it, I'll get it myself. Why should *you ?*

Doris : But I want to look after you. I don't get many chances.

Jim : I believe you'd like me to be ill.

Doris : If I could be with you, I shouldn't mind. Of course, not really ill. I don't mean that. Just so that you couldn't get away.

Jim : Women are morbid.

DORIS : Morbid ?

JIM : They'd rather have a sick man *in* the house than a healthy one out of it.

DORIS (*bends and kisses his hand*) : Oh, I wish time would stop sometimes.

JIM : All right if you can choose your own time.

DORIS : I'd choose now. Nothing better than this can happen. I'll always remember this place.

JIM : It is lovely, isn't it ?

DORIS : I've never liked the country before. It frightens me rather.

JIM : Little Cockney.

DORIS : But I like it with you.

JIM : A month out of London would do you all the good in the world. You ought to take a holiday.

DORIS : I'd love to. Where'd we go ?

JIM : I ? I can't do that sort of thing. I've got to work.

DORIS : I wouldn't go without you. (*Pause.*) Must we go back to-morrow ?

JIM : Afraid so.

DORIS : Not another night ? Oh, wouldn't that be lovely ? Can we come next week ?

JIM : Next week ? Well, I'm not sure about that.

DORIS : Do let's.

JIM : I'm not sure how I shall be fixed.

DORIS (*after a pause*) : Do you mean your wife will be back ?

JIM : She's a week overdue now.

DORIS : Jim ! You won't stop seeing me, will you ? You won't ? I couldn't bear it.

JIM : Naturally, it won't be so easy.

DORIS : You mean we won't be able to go away together ?

JIM : Certainly not that, I'm afraid.

DORIS : But you will *see* me ?

[*There is no answer.*

You *must*. You couldn't not do that.

JIM (*slowly*) : My dear, you know I told you.—I warned you, didn't I ?

DORIS : I know, but that was different.—That was before.

JIM : Nothing's altered, you know.

DORIS : Oh, yes. Everything's different now. I love you *so* much more. I couldn't get on without you now. (*Violently.*) I'd rather die.

JIM : Don't talk like that, it's silly.

DORIS : But I *would*. Why should it make any difference ? It isn't as if you loved her.

JIM : But I do, Doris, I've told you.

DORIS : You can't. Not like this. If you did, you wouldn't be here—would you ?

JIM : Yes. That *sounds* simple enough.

DORIS : What's she like ? Is she very lovely ?

JIM : *I* think so.

DORIS : Prettier than me ?

JIM : It's different—quite different.

DORIS : She can't love you like I do. If she did, she wouldn't have gone away.

JIM : You don't understand. Don't you see, it's all *part* of me, my life with her ?

DORIS : But I'm part of you, too. I *am*, aren't I ?

JIM : Of course.

DORIS : The best part ?

JIM : In one way—yes—the last of my youth—adventure—romance.

DORIS : You'll never be sorry, will you ?

JIM : No.

DORIS : Promise ?

[*He nods.*

I'll never be sorry either ; *whatever* happens. I want you to remember that. This is what the gipsy meant. She said I'd be happy while it lasted, and I have.

[*There is a pause.*

JIM : Shall we turn in ?

DORIS : Will they think it funny if we go to bed now ?

JIM : Do you mind what they think ?

DORIS : Not a bit. I don't mind what anybody thinks.

JIM : Not even Milly ?

DORIS : I don't like Milly any more. She's stupid.

JIM : I'm afraid that's my fault.

DORIS : It isn't her business. I don't interfere with her.

JIM : Don't quarrel with her. She's a good friend.

DORIS : I don't care. I don't like anybody who doesn't like you.

JIM (*kisses her hand*) : I am not worth it, Doris.

[*The* SERVANT *comes out of the darkness with a tray. She clears away the cups and a few odd things and goes.*

SERVANT : Good-night, sir.

JIM : Good-night.

SERVANT : Good-night, madam. What time in the morning, please ?

[DORIS *looks at* JIM.

JIM : Eight o'clock, please.

SERVANT : Thank you, sir.

[*She goes.*

DORIS : Did you hear ? She called me madam.

JIM : Your wedding ring hasn't lived in vain. Does that make you feel very grown-up ?

DORIS (*slowly*) : Oh, I'm grown-up all right. Do you think they pay much attention to that sort of thing ?

JIM : What sort of thing ?

DORIS : Wedding rings ?

JIM : I don't suppose they do.

DORIS : Do you think many people come here like us ?

JIM : I shouldn't wonder.

DORIS : How did you find out about it ?

JIM (*smiling*) : Not that way.

DORIS : No, I didn't mean that. I mean—if you'd been here before, like this—you wouldn't have come with me, would you ?

JIM : No.

DORIS : I wonder if it knows.

JIM : It ?

DORIS : The garden. The house. All of it. I wonder if it knows that people come here to be happy. I should think it must.

JIM : Funny child.

DORIS : I always think places *must* know, and be glad when people come again. I felt yesterday that it knew us again and was glad we'd come back. It must be dreadful for it when people don't come back. It must wonder what has happened.

JIM (*rising suddenly*) : Don't, Doris.

DORIS : Jim !

JIM (*violently*) : You make it feel like a charnel house.

DORIS : Jim !

JIM (*recovering himself*) : Darling, I'm sorry. I didn't mean that.

[*They drift into the darkness.*

DORIS (*confidently*) : We'll come back, won't we ?

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Scene 3

Scene : Clemency Warlock's *bedroom in Montagu Square.*
Time : *The night of Saturday, 5th July.*
Half-unpacked suitcases are lying about ; also odd garments belonging to Clemency, *who is now in the bathroom.*

[Gorla *comes in in evening dress. She crosses to the bathroom door.*

Gorla : Clemency ! You'll be like a lobster if you don't get out of that bath.

Clemency (*from the bathroom*) : I am out.

[Jim *comes in from the passage.*

Jim : Hello, young 'un !

Gorla : Hello, Jim !

Jim : Where's Clemency ?

Gorla : In the bath. Been talking to Joe ? Telling him what a good wife I shall be ? I say, you haven't told him about Tristram, have you ?

Jim : Suppose I did ?

Gorla : Not that it really matters. It was ages ago.

Jim : Ages !

Gorla : It was before I met Joe. Everything before that is ages ago. It's terrible fun being engaged. If I'd gone to Paris with Tristram it wouldn't have been nearly such fun now, would it ? You were so terribly right about that, darling, and I thought you such a sop. Isn't Joe divine ?

Jim : Um—m. He's pawing the mat downstairs. I shouldn't expect too much to-night. There's been trouble at the Customs.

Gorla : What ? No !

Jim : Something about cami-knickers.

Gorla : Lord !

Jim : He doesn't think you ought to have put them in *his* bag. It's the sort of thing that leads to misunderstanding. They asked if they were for his personal use.

Gorla : But I thought they wouldn't open *his* bag.

Clemency ! Do you hear ?

Clemency : What ?

Gorla : They opened Joe's bag and found the " oh-be-joyfuls." (*To* Jim.) What happened ?

Jim : Well, he's not in prison, but I gather definitely a poorer man.

Gorla : I wonder if I'd better not go out, after all. Had I better go to bed ? Is he really snotty ?

Jim : He's certainly eloquent.

Clemency (*appearing at the bathroom door*) : You'd better realise once for all, Gorla, that men hate smuggling. They are law-abiding creatures.

Gorla : Oh, well. If a man's going to be a coward about Customs, one may as well know it at once.

Jim : And I don't think you'll mend matters by keeping him waiting.

Gorla (*making up*) : Ah ! This interview may require a high standard of personal charm. You wouldn't like my new-born enthusiasm for matrimony to come to shipwreck on a few underclothes. (*To* Jim.) I'm a changed woman, Jim ; I'm simply devoted to the idea of matrimony. I want Joe and me to be just like you and Clemency—" The world forgetting by the world forgot." I do hope Joe won't say anything to upset me about it. (*Gets up.*) Anyhow, thank you ever so for letting Clemency take me. I know now how hellish it must have been for you. Joe will never let me go off for six weeks—at least, I hope he won't. (*Going to* Clemency.) Good-night, darling, and thank you a thousand times for everything.

Clemency : Good-night.

Gorla : I do wish I didn't feel so like an early Christian going into the Colosseum.

Jim : Shall I come with you ?

Gorla : No, don't come down. I shall do better alone. And you're both going to have a lovely time together—so are we—after the first shock.

[*She waves her hand, and is gone.*

JIM : Well, you were certainly right about her. She's swallowed orthodoxy, hook-line-and-sinker. How did you do it ?

CLEMENCY : If people are going fast enough, it's not difficult to steer them.

JIM : Like sailing boats. It's the slow movers that are difficult.

CLEMENCY : Like us ? You know—I thought about that a lot.

JIM : About what ?

CLEMENCY : Our being dull. I wondered. Have you missed me ?

JIM : Have I missed you !

CLEMENCY : No, but really ?

[*He nods.*

I hated not coming back at the end of the month, but it was just coming to the point. I daren't. I couldn't spoil it all for the sake of a week more, could I ?

JIM : Of course not.

CLEMENCY : What have you been doing ? Has Mrs. Woods looked after you all right ?

JIM : Oh, yes. I've not troubled her much. I've dined out a good deal.

CLEMENCY : The Club ?

JIM : Um.

CLEMENCY : Seen anyone interesting ?

JIM : Not specially.

CLEMENCY : Don't tell me *all* at once, will you Jim ?

JIM (*startled*) : How do you mean ?

CLEMENCY : Such a cataract of information !

JIM : Well, I wrote you everything. I wrote oftener than you did.

CLEMENCY : Yes, you *were* good. But letters ! You're not a terribly good letter writer, are you ?

JIM : Well, what was there to say ? You know what life is here, the daily round——

CLEMENCY : Been working hard ?

JIM : Pretty well.

CLEMENCY : Not too much ? You look tired.

JIM : I'm all right.

CLEMENCY : Talking of the daily round, there's one common task you haven't done yet.

JIM : Oh ?

CLEMENCY : You haven't kissed me yet.

JIM : I did—at the station.

CLEMENCY : At the station ? Oh, well ! How do you think I'm looking ?

JIM : Lovely—as always.

CLEMENCY : No, no. Same old face.

(*Suddenly lays his hand against her cheek.*

Same old wife.

JIM (*lets his hand rest there a moment, but does not kiss her*) : Tell me about this fellow Joe. What's he like ?

CLEMENCY : What he looks. He was a Rugby International —British and reliable. What one wants in a husband.

JIM : Does Gorla want that ?

CLEMENCY : Every woman does. Reliability—that's the husband's long suit. The Colman-Menjou business is all very well, but not for marriage. Life would be simply hell if you couldn't trust a man. Every time he went out, wondering where he was going—and how many of your friends knew. Suppose you couldn't trust me ?

JIM : You ?

CLEMENCY : Yes ! Supposing you didn't really believe me about Aix. That you thought it wasn't really Gorla at all who kept me there ?

JIM : That never occurred to me.

CLEMENCY : Exactly. That's where you're lucky—where we're both lucky—perhaps. You probably don't even think that I have any chances.

JIM : Chances ?

CLEMENCY : Yes. Of affairs—little romances.

JIM : Do you know, I never thought about it.

CLEMENCY : It's disgusting of you. And all conceit.

JIM : Would you like me not to trust you ?

CLEMENCY : No, but I don't want you to think that I couldn't if I wanted to. As a matter of fact, I could have lots of dishonourable proposals if I wanted them. That's where you're so maddeningly right. I don't *want* them, and so they don't happen. As a matter of fact, I did have one at Aix.

JIM : What ?

CLEMENCY : There ! You see.

JIM : Who was it ?

CLEMENCY : An Italian officer.

JIM : Oh ! Italian. That's automatic.

CLEMENCY : Don't be rude. He liked me.

JIM : I'm sure he did.

CLEMENCY : And he was divinely beautiful. And said *the* most wonderful things.

JIM : Well, why didn't you ?

CLEMENCY : Jim ! You don't really think I could. (*Looks at him.*) What's the matter ?

JIM : Why do you want to talk of all this ? It's not *us*, all that sort of thing.

CLEMENCY : I was only joking.

JIM : I know.

CLEMENCY : Sometimes I wonder. *Ought* one to be so sure ?

[*The telephone by the bedside rings.*

Who on earth is that, at this time of night ?

JIM (*at the telephone*) : Yes, who is it ?—Mr. Warlock speaking. Oh, it's you.—Yes, it's me—Where are you speaking from ? Well, what is it ?—No, I told you—I'll let you know—I can't be sure.—No, that's impossible. Yes, to-night—going to turn in, yes.—Good-night.

[*His voice has been irritable and nervous.* CLEMENCY *has noticed this.*

CLEMENCY : Well ?

JIM : A party in Chelsea. Someone wants to know if I'm going.

CLEMENCY : Chelsea ? Why don't you go ?

JIM : To-night ? Good heavens, no !

CLEMENCY : I feel the superfluous woman.

JIM : Don't be silly. Anyhow, I've a dozen letters to write.

CLEMENCY : To-night ?

JIM : Well, they've got to be done sometime.

[*He goes to his dressing-room.* CLEMENCY *slowly crosses the room, switches off the main lights, and gets into bed. She leaves the bed light on.* JIM *comes back and stands in the doorway between the rooms.*

By the way, there *is* something I ought to tell you.

CLEMENCY (*her voice shaking a little*) : Important ?

JIM : Well, it is rather.

CLEMENCY : Must you to-night ?

JIM : Well, you'll have to know. I really ought to have written.

CLEMENCY (*nervously*) : Yes ?

JIM : It happened soon after you left.

CLEMENCY : Tell me to-morrow.

JIM : You'll have to decide what you want to do.

[*She looks blankly at him.*

It's about those copper shares I bought for you. Moxon rang up after you'd gone and said that——

[*She bursts into laughter.*

What's the matter ?

CLEMENCY : Oh, Jim, you ass !

JIM : Why ?

CLEMENCY : What did you frighten me for ?

JIM : Frighten you ?

CLEMENCY : I thought it was something really important.

JIM : Well, they've gone to one-and-fourpence.

CLEMENCY : I don't care if they're a ha'penny. Really !

[*She is half laughing and half crying. He comes over to her and puts his hand on her shoulder.*

JIM : Well, I must say. You're tired—better go to sleep now.

CLEMENCY : I'm not tired.

[*She draws down his head and kisses him.*

JIM (*slowly withdrawing himself*) : Yes, you are. If you're not, you ought to be. Got everything you want ?

[*He tucks her in, full of care and kindness, and everything that is at the moment of no particular use to her. She remains motionless, following him with her eyes.* There. I won't wake you to-morrow. Have your sleep out.

[*He kisses her gently and goes to his room, closing the door.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

Scene 4

Scene : *Kensington Gardens.*
Time : *The evening of the 7th July.*
It has been raining and a green park seat glistens with moisture.

[Jim *is alone. He wears a light raincoat with the collar turned up, and a soft hat pulled over his eyes. He gets up from the seat and walks about, looks at his watch. He decides to wait no longer, and walks off the stage to the right.* Doris *hurries in, wet through. She is out of breath.*

Doris : Jim !

[*He returns.*

I thought I'd miss you. I ran. I simply couldn't get away. (*She holds his arm.*) I was so afraid you'd go.

Jim : But, my dear, you're wet through.

Doris : The buses were all full. I had to come on top. You're wet, too.

Jim : No, I'm all right. Look here, you can't stay like that.

Doris : Let's go back home ; Milly's out.

Jim : My dear, I can't do that.

Doris : Oh, why ?

Jim : I've got to get back and dress. I'm going out.

Doris : I thought we were going to have the evening together.

Jim : Doris, you know I can't.

Doris : Why ?

Jim : I told you—on the telephone. That's another thing. You mustn't do that, you know.

Doris : What ?

Jim : Ring me up on the telephone at home. It isn't possible.

Doris : I wanted to see you. I didn't know what to do. You sounded so angry.

Jim : My wife was there, in the room. It's too dangerous.

DORIS : I didn't know. I'm terribly sorry. Please don't be angry.

JIM : I'm not, but you mustn't do that.

DORIS : I haven't seen you for three days.

JIM : It's going to be rather difficult to see each other as often as we did.

DORIS : I want you all the time. I thought about you all the time on Sunday. About our last week-end. When can we go away again ?

JIM : I want you to go away soon for a holiday. You want it.

DORIS : With you ?

JIM : I'm afraid not.

DORIS : I won't go without you. Anyhow, I couldn't afford it.

JIM : My dear, that's my affair.

DORIS : It certainly isn't. As if I would !

JIM : Nonsense. When do you get a holiday ?

DORIS : I've got that all right.

JIM : How do you mean ?

DORIS : I've got the sack.

JIM : From Ducette's ? Why ?

DORIS : She's furious. Says my mind isn't on my work. (*Holds up a parcel.*) This happened to-day.

JIM : What's that ?

DORIS : I've spilt tea on it. I've got to clean it at home. Of course, that put the lid on it. She's quite right. I'm no good now. I keep thinking about you.

JIM : What are you going to do ?

DORIS : Oh, I'll get something.

JIM : You must have a rest first. Now's your chance.

DORIS : You want to get rid of me. Why don't you say you don't want me any more ?

JIM : Because it isn't true.

DORIS : You *do* want me ? Just the same ?

JIM : Yes, that's the trouble.

DORIS : Why ? Why can't we go on as we were before ?

JIM : I've told you.

DORIS : *She* needn't know. It won't hurt her if she doesn't know. You needn't take me out. You can see me at home. That's all I want.

JIM : And where should I be supposed to be ?

DORIS : You've got an office, haven't you ?

JIM : Oh ! My dear !

DORIS : Other people do it.

JIM : Lies. All the time, lies.

DORIS : If you loved me you wouldn't mind. You can't give me up, Jim. You can't.

JIM : I warned you. We knew it couldn't last. You knew that from the beginning.

DORIS : Yes, I know ; I'm cheating.

JIM : You know what you said yourself.

DORIS : That I'd go away when you wanted ? I'd have said anything then. Oh, God ! What am I to do ? Do you mean I'm not to see you again ? Ever ?

JIM : No, no. I don't mean that, but it can't be the same. Of course we'll meet again.

DORIS : When ?

JIM : Soon.

DORIS : To-morrow ?

JIM : No, I can't to-morrow.

DORIS : Wednesday ?

JIM : Perhaps. I'll see.

DORIS : At the Marble Arch Pavilion. I could be there soon after six.

JIM : I'll try.

DORIS : Promise ?

JIM : All right. Wednesday.

[*There is a pause.*

It's going to rain again. (*He gets up.*) I'll get you a taxi at Queen's Road.

DORIS : No, I'll go by Tube. Aren't you going to kiss me ? There's no one here.

[*He kisses her rather hurriedly.*

You'll have forgotten all about me in half an hour. I wish I'd never gone to that restaurant, then we wouldn't have met. No, that isn't true. It's been worth it. It has, hasn't it ?

JIM : It's been wonderful. I'll never forget you, Doris.

DORIS : Do you remember the gipsy ? She said I'd be happy while my luck lasted. And I was, indeed, I was.

JIM : You'll be happy again.

DORIS : And lucky when my happiness went, she said. I wonder what she meant. (*She looks him in the face.*) It's gone now all right.

[*She turns and hurries away.* JIM *stands looking after her.*

THE LIGHTS FADE OUT

Scene 5

Scene : *Jim Warlock's library at Montagu Square.*
Time : *The evening of the 10th July.*
Jim's writing-table stands on the right of the room. A window at the back looks on a London Square. On either side of the room at the back is a door. The fireplace is on the left of the room, in front of it a club fender. The walls are lined with books.

[Clemency, *carrying some letters, comes in from the hall by the door on the right. She sits down on the club fender and opens her letters.* Jim *follows her into the room. He has a brief in his hand.*

Clemency : July the twenty-sixth ? Constance wants us to go for the week-end.

Jim (*sitting down at the desk and scrutinising his brief*) : Oh !

Clemency : What about it ?

Jim : Do you want to ?

Clemency : I'm willing to sacrifice myself !

Jim : For me ?

Clemency : We're going up in the world. Last time we were asked to tea !

Jim : She's a shameless woman. Why does she want us ?

Clemency : She doesn't. She wants you. She prays daily for my death. I suppose we had better go. You'll meet somebody interesting. I must give her that.

Jim : What's her line just now ? I thought she'd taken up religion. I'm not terribly good on bishops.

[Merton, *Clemency's maid, comes in by the door on the right.*

Clemency : Yes, Merton ?

Merton : Which dress will you be wearing this evening, madam ?

Clemency : I'm just coming up. What shall I wear, Jim ?

Jim : Where are we dining ?

CLEMENCY : Claridge's.

JIM : What about the jade green ?

CLEMENCY : My dear, it died on me months ago, with the other kilts ! That I should live to be ashamed of my legs ! There's a white fringe frock I got in Paris, you haven't seen that——

JIM : It sounds all right.

CLEMENCY : Merton, the new white one.

MERTON : Very good, madam. (*She goes out.*)

JIM : I suppose you really let yourself go in Paris ?

CLEMENCY : No. Only what I simply had to get. It's no fun gettings things without you. Thank God I married a man who knows what I've got on !—Enjoyed our walk ? (*She looks out of the window.*) London's rather nice in July. I think I shall make a habit of calling for you, and walking home. So good for our livers. Would you like that ?

JIM : Very much. I see you doing it !

CLEMENCY : There's something romantic about a London park—all the little couples on their little chairs. (JIM *doesn't reply.*) Coming to dress ?

JIM : Directly. I'll put in ten minutes on this.

CLEMENCY : I wish you didn't have to work so hard. When does Term end ?

JIM : About six weeks.

CLEMENCY : I suppose it will be worse next year, if you take Silk ?

JIM : It may be much better. I might not have any work at all ! You never know.

CLEMENCY : What shall we do in August ?

JIM : Aren't we going to Scotland ?

CLEMENCY : People ! Can't we go somewhere by ourselves ?

JIM : Abroad ?

CLEMENCY : Yes.

JIM : Brioni ?

CLEMENCY : No, not that sort of place. Somewhere really

quiet. You're tired, you know. You've not been very nice to me since we came back, have you ?

JIM : Oh ?

CLEMENCY : You know you haven't. You hated my going. I know, I ought to have asked you about it. Sorry. (*She puts her hand on* JIM's *shoulder. He pats it.*)

JIM : Nonsense ! You know you can do just as you like !

CLEMENCY : I know, but if you don't like it, I don't want to do it. I'm a modern woman, Jim. If I'm given my head, I keep looking for the bridle. Well, Tring's coming at half-past-seven. Little drinks upstairs ? I'm expecting to hear something of your murky past to-night !

[*The* BUTLER *comes in by the door on the right.*

BUTLER : Mr. Tring.

CLEMENCY : Heavens ! What's the time ?

[TRING *comes in ; the* BUTLER *withdraws.*

TRING : No, I'm early. The streets were miraculously empty.

CLEMENCY : I went to meet Jim at his Chambers. We walked back through the Park.

[*She goes out by the door on the left.* TRING *takes her seat on the club fender.*

JIM : Hullo, Tring. I won't be a minute.

TRING : Admirable man ! You like work ?

JIM : Yes.

TRING : You've all the virtues, the industrious apprentice !

JIM : There's some Tio Pepe upstairs.

TRING : Ah ! I taught you something !

JIM : Quite a lot—too much !

TRING : Did you ever go to Joseph's again ?

JIM : Once.

TRING : With our young friend—what was her name —— ?

JIM : You mean Doris Lea ?

TRING : A lovely little thing, but dangerous.

JIM : How " dangerous " ?

TRING : *Le type amoureux.* The sort that flies off the handle. So you followed it up ?

JIM : I saw her once or twice.

TRING : Naturally. The primrose path—and now back to the high road. As Stevenson has it : " Long and straight and dusty to the grave."

JIM : I don't feel like that at all, thank you.

TRING : No. Your wife's a remarkable woman. Poor Doris was over-handicapped.

JIM : What do you mean ?

TRING : Out of her class. Top-weight wins in a canter.

JIM : You think there has been a race ?

TRING : I'm not asking questions—but I happened to run into our friend Miss Miles last week.

JIM : Milly ?

TRING : Yes.

JIM : Well, what did she say ?

TRING : More than I wanted to hear. We're not popular in that quarter.

JIM : Did she say anything about me ?

TRING : A great deal.

JIM : I've not seen her since Derby Day.

TRING : But you've seen Doris, they live together.

JIM : She wouldn't tell her anything—— !

TRING : My dear Warlock, there are limits to reasonable optimism ! What do you suppose girls like that talk about ? What have they got to talk about !

JIM : Doris wouldn't ! (*He gets up and walks over to* TRING.) Look here, Tring, I suppose in your time you have had some serious love affairs ?

TRING : As you say—in my time !

JIM : And they came to an end ?

TRING : Should I be alive otherwise ?

JIM : Did you ever leave someone whom you still wanted, and who wanted you ?

TRING : Indeed, yes !

JIM : Well, why did you do it ?

TRING : Why not ? There are more reasons for leaving someone you want than there are for leaving someone you don't want. It's people who are indifferent who stay together. If you're going to make a bonfire you want something to strike a match on !

JIM : And if the house catches fire, and there's someone who won't leave it ?

TRING : Yes, that's the trouble. Women may have no sense of time, but they have a mighty strong sense of Eternity !

JIM : They're not all alike !

TRING : They are to the same man. Just as all men are alike to some woman. It's what *you* are that matters, not what *they* are. A man always thinks : " Ah ! If I'd chosen someone different ! "—Illusion ! To him every woman would be the same. That's Don Juan's tragedy. He can only hear one tune. Every woman he meets knows that. If she can't sing it, she passes him by. We're all tuned in to a certain wave-length. We only pick up what we're tuned into. Your little Doris—you think if she had been different, less romantic, less serious, things would be easier ? But you would have got the same reaction in the end with any Sunday school teacher !—No, it's all very painful. She's going to suffer, and it's because you are what you are. You're that kind of man—kind-hearted, sympathetic, gentle. The sort that's bound to make hell of somebody's life !

JIM : Surely if you're fond of someone you want to be kind ?

TRING : You may want to, but you mustn't unless you want to damn them utterly !

JIM : The least one owes is a little consideration !

TRING : Consideration ? When you're telling a woman you don't want her ?—It's like brushing a man's hair the morning you hang him !

JIM : She *knew*—she knew I was married ! I told her it couldn't last. She agreed, absolutely !

TRING : Of course she agreed. A woman in love ! She would tear up Magna Carta ! You must face facts. What a woman says *before* isn't evidence !

JIM : Don't they ever mean what they say ?

TRING : Certainly they mean it. But what they don't know is what it's going to mean to them ! That's where they have the bulge on us. We do stay put. If a girl marries a man, thinking she's got hold of Casanova, it's a hundred to one that she won't find in a few weeks she's drawn John Knox. But a man may easily start his honeymoon with Helen of Troy and find himself landed with a vestal virgin !

JIM : Or vice versa ?

TRING : Exactly ! That's the trouble about marriage. Women always hope it's going to change the husband. Men always hope it won't change the wives—and both are disappointed ! (*He gets up.*) Never if you can help it be a woman's first lover—unless, of course, you've got the explorer's temperament. As for your little trouble—get out of it, quick ! It's not your line of country.

JIM : Yes, but how ?

TRING : It doesn't matter how, so long as you don't try to behave like a gentleman. That's always fatal !

JIM : Well, I'm going to dress.

[*He walks across to the left-hand door. The* BUTLER *opens the other door.*

BUTLER : There's a young person to see you, sir.

JIM (*stopping*) : What sort of person ?

BUTLER : A young woman, sir.

JIM : What does she want ! Did she give her name ?

BUTLER : Miss Miles, sir. She said you would know the name.

JIM (*after a moment's hesitation*) : Oh, well—all right. She had better come in.

[BUTLER *disappears.*

TRING : I'll go, unless——

JIM : Yes, of course. Here, go this way, through the dining-room. You don't want to meet her.

TRING : Not particularly.

JIM : Tell Clemency I won't be ten minutes. I'll do a quick change !

[TRING *goes out by the door on the left ; the* BUTLER *shows in* MILLY *by the other door, and then goes out again.*

Well ?

MILLY : Well yourself !

JIM : What's happened ? Is Doris ill ?

MILLY : Much you care, sending her home wet through ! Not your fault if she isn't—You don't ask me to sit down.

JIM : I'm sorry. (*He indicates a chair.*)

MILLY : No, thanks. Nice little place you've got, haven't you ? (*Looking at a photograph.*) That's your wife, I suppose ? I don't see any photographs of Doris.

JIM : Do you mind telling me why you're here ? Did Doris ask you to come ?

MILLY : No, she didn't. She said if I came she'd never speak to me again.

JIM : In that case—have we anything to say to each other ?

MILLY : I've something to say. You promised to meet her last night.

JIM : Well ?

MILLY : You didn't go.

JIM : I said I'd try. I couldn't manage it. I've written to tell her how sorry I was.

MILLY : Sorry ? Why should you be sorry ? You've had your fun. She's only a shop-girl—chuck her out in the rain when you've finished with her ! That's what we're there for !

JIM : If that's all you have to say, you'd better go !

MILLY : I'm not in any hurry, thank you ! (*She sits on the club fender.*) What are you going to do about it ?

JIM : About what ?

MILLY : She's lost her job. She told you that.

JIM : Yes, I know.

MILLY : What's she to do now ? A gentleman would put his hand in his pocket——

JIM : Oh ? Money ?

MILLY : A gentleman would be glad to do it——

JIM : And what would Doris say to that ?

MILLY : She's crazy ! Someone's got to look after her !

JIM : It isn't a question I'm going to discuss with you.

MILLY : Oh ? And suppose I want to discuss it ? Suppose I was to tell your wife ?

JIM : Well, she's in the house. You'll find her upstairs.

MILLY : You want me to tell her ?

JIM : I'm certainly not going to stop you. (*He moves to the window.*) By the time you've finished, a policeman will be here.

MILLY : What policeman ?

JIM (*pointing*) : The one at the end of the street.

MILLY : Here, none of that ! I'm not doing any harm !

JIM : That's a matter of opinion. Trying to extract money by threats—some people call it blackmail——

MILLY : I wasn't asking for myself——

JIM : I doubt if the magistrate will see the difference.

MILLY : You wouldn't dare ! It'd be in the papers !

JIM : It might be, if you got five years——

MILLY : And what about you ?

JIM : My name won't appear.

MILLY : You damned swine ! All right ! You're too clever for me ! I'll go. No wonder you've broken her heart ! My God !

JIM (*stopping her*) : Where is she ?

MILLY : She's at home, cleaning a dress—and crying.

JIM : She'll have got my letter now.

MILLY : That will be a treat for her ! (*Violently.*) What the hell did you want, butting in ? She was happy enough !

JIM (*disturbed*) : Wait a minute, wait a minute.

[*He goes to his table and starts to write a letter. The* Butler *appears.*

Butler : If you please, sir, there's a police officer would like to speak to you.

Jim : Oh ?

Milly (*wildly*) : Look here, what's the game ? You've got nothing on me !

Jim : Please, please ! This has nothing to do with you. (*To the* Butler.) What does he want ?

Butler : He didn't say, sir. It's an Inspector.

Jim : Oh ? Well, let him come in.

[*The* Butler *withdraws.* Clemency's *voice is heard.*

Clemency (*invisible*) : Gorla, we're ready ! (*She comes in from the left, followed by* Tring.) Jim dear, do you know what the time is ? (*She sees* Milly.) Oh——

[*The door on the right opens and a* Police Inspector *comes in. He addresses* Tring.

Inspector : Mr. James Warlock ?

Jim : Yes ?

Tring (*indicating* Jim) : That is Mr. Warlock.

Inspector : Could I have a word with you, sir ?

Jim : Well, what is it ?

Inspector : Are you acquainted with a young woman of the name of Lea ?

Jim (*startled*) : Who ?

Inspector : Doris Emily Lea, of Gresham Mansions, Farmer's Green.

Jim : Why do you ask me that ?

Inspector : A letter from you was found at her rooms.

Jim : Well ?

Inspector : Well, sir, would you be surprised to hear that the young woman is—dead ?

Jim : What—— ?

Inspector : Dead.

Jim : When—when did you say—— ?

INSPECTOR : Two o'clock they found her. Suicide, I should say.

JIM : Oh, my God !

MILLY (*rousing herself from her frozen horror*) : Now perhaps you're satisfied ? Damn you—damn you to hell ! You bloody gentleman !

[*She falls sobbing on the chair.* CLEMENCY *stares aghast at* JIM.

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE : *A Coroner's Court in North London.*
TIME : *The morning of the 12th of July.*

In the centre of the back of the stage sits the CORONER *behind a desk. To his left is the witness-stand and beyond that the benches accommodating the witnesses. Of these the nearest to the audience is* JIM. *At the other end of the bench sits* MILLY *and behind her* MADAME DUCETTE. *Opposite the benches of the Witnesses sit the jury. In front of the* JURY *are reporters. At the back of the stage sit and stand the general public, among whom* TRING *is noticeable. Beside the* CORONER *stands a* POLICE SERGEANT, *who acts as Clerk of the Court. A* POLICE OFFICER *is in the witness-stand when the Curtain rises, in the middle of his evidence.*

CORONER : Yes, and then—— ?

CONSTABLE : I entered the bedroom of the flat. On the floor to the right of the bed lay the body of a young woman.

CORONER : Was she dead ?

CONSTABLE : Life appeared to have been extinct for some time. By the side of the body I found a bottle nearly empty. It contained salts of lemon.

CORONER (*to the* JURY) : Salts of lemon is the common name for the chemical which the Police Surgeon who gave evidence just now called potassium super-oxylate. As you know, it is used for cleaning clothes. (*To the* CONSTABLE.) Well ?

CONSTABLE : Death seemed to be due to swallowing the salts. The lips, mouth and throat were burned.

CORONER (*to the* JURY) : The usual effects of the acid. (*To the* CONSTABLE.) Go on.

CONSTABLE : I searched the flat. In the letter-box I found a letter that had come by the afternoon post. I opened it.

CORONER : Can you remember the contents ?

CONSTABLE : It was written from a house in Montagu

Square. Its writer explained why he had not been able to meet the deceased the evening before.

CORONER : Was the letter signed ?

CONSTABLE : The name at the end was " Jim."

CORONER (*handing the* POLICE SERGEANT *a letter to show to the Witness*) : Do you identify that letter ?

CONSTABLE : That's it, sir.

CORONER (*to the* JURY) : Do any of you gentlemen or ladies wish to ask this witness any questions ?

[*The* JURY *converse. The* FOREMAN *gets up.*

FOREMAN : We want to know if the officer found any money in the flat.

CONSTABLE : There was one shilling and threepence in the deceased's purse.

FOREMAN : That all ?

CONSTABLE : And a season-ticket from Farmer's Green to Leicester Square.

FOREMAN : Huh ! (*He sits down.*)

CORONER : Any more questions ?

[*There is no reply.*

Next witness—Madame Ducette.

[*The* POLICE CONSTABLE *leaves the box and* MADAME DUCETTE *enters it ; she is handed the oath by the* POLICE SERGEANT.

MME. D. : I swear that the evidence I shall give touching this inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth——

CORONER : Your name ?

MME. D. : Madame Ducette.

CORONER : Christian name ?

MME. D. : Corysande.

CORONER : You carry on a dressmaker's business in Greek Street, Shaftesbury Avenue ?

MME. D. : Yes.

CORONER : The deceased girl was one of your employees ?

MME. D. : Yes, sir.

CORONER : Was she a good worker ?

MME. D. : Very good, up to a few weeks ago.

CORONER : Her work had been less satisfactory lately ?

MME. D. : Her mind was not on it.

CORONER : Why was that, do you think ?

MME. D. : I say to myself : " There is a man ! "

CORONER : Why do you think that ?

MME. D. : One can always tell. Silk underclothes, lipstick, bottles of perfume—what would you ?

CORONER : I see. And did she seem unhappy ?

MME. D. : The last week or two. Before that she seemed very happy, and then—Boufn !—*la misère !*

CORONER : Ah, that is how it always is ?

[MADAME DUCETTE *shrugs.*

At any rate, her work became unsatisfactory and you discharged her. You gave her a week's notice ?

MME. D. : On Monday. She go too far that time—*voyons !*

CORONER : In what way ?

MME. D. : She comes late that morning, that is the beginning. If only she had told me why ! But she say nothing, she say nothing all that morning, only sit and look at the past with big eyes. My girls see she is unhappy, they offer the remedy for all English ills——

CORONER : What may that be ?

MME. D. : A cup of tea, monsieur. But Doris sees it not and with her elbow she spill it over a new Paris model—— !

CORONER : That made you angry ?

MME. D. : Would it not make you angry, too ? I give the poor little one a week's notice and tell her to take the costume home and clean it. If I had known !

CORONER : I see. And you gave her salts of lemon to clean it with ?

MME. D. (*nervously*) : Yes, monsieur. How can I guess ? I show her the label in red—" Poison "—the bottle blue ! Was it my fault ?

CORONER : No, no. Was she often sad at her work ?

MME. D. : Never, monsieur, never till this week. She make us all laugh with her jokes. She was what we call in France "*gamine*." You have the girl but not the word.

CORONER : Thank you, Madame Ducette. I don't think you can tell us any more, and I do not think you need feel to blame for a tragedy which you could not foresee.

MME. D. : *Merci*, monsieur.

[MADAME DUCETTE *leaves the box, and returns to her seat with the other witnesses.*

CORONER : Miss Miles !

MILLY (*from her seat*) : Here !

[*She enters the box ; the* SERGEANT *hands her the oath.*

I swear that the evidence which I shall give touching this inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

CORONER : Name ?

MILLY : Miss Miles.

CORONER : Christian name ?

MILLY : Mildred—they call me " Milly."

CORONER (*writing*) : I have to call you " Mildred." Address ?

MILLY : Seven, Gresham Mansions, Farmer's Green.

CORONER : You lived with Doris Lea ?

MILLY : She was my friend.

CORONER : You were living together when——

MILLY : I saw her last that morning—Thursday morning—at breakfast. (*She is unable to go on.*)

CORONER : Take your time.

MILLY : We quarrelled. We—— I won't see her now to make it up ! Never—— !

CORONER : Don't distress yourself. We cannot recall the past. What was the quarrel about ?

MILLY (*indicating* JIM) : Him ! Jim Warlock.

CORONER : The man who signed the letter ?

MILLY : That's right.

CORONER : Was the writer of the letter a friend of the deceased ?

MILLY : If you call that being a friend.

CORONER : How long had they known each other ?

MILLY : A month or so—six weeks, perhaps. He spoke to us in a restaurant.

CORONER : And you made friends ?

MILLY : It wasn't an ordinary " pick up," if that's what you're getting at. He had an old man with him—old enough to know better. They looked respectable enough. They kept sending us fruit. Well, we had to say " thank you," didn't we ?

CORONER : You must not ask me questions. And at this restaurant a further meeting was arranged ?

MILLY : Just what it wasn't ! But they found out where we lived. I never thought we should see them again. I wish to God we hadn't !

CORONER : What happened on the next occasion ?

MILLY : That was the opening of the Baths at Farmer's Green. There was a Beauty Show. After that there was the Derby.

CORONER : He took the deceased to the Derby ?

MILLY : He didn't take her. We met him there—him and the old man.

CORONER : By accident ?

MILLY : What do you think ? They told Doris where they would be. The old man did that.

CORONER : In fact, a rendezvous was arranged.

MILLY : If that's what you call it—yes. Then Doris and he gave us the slip, and he took her back to London and out to dinner, and he took her home afterwards. That's when it started.

CORONER : Were you at home when they got back ?

MILLY : I wasn't there at all that night. I was at mother's

CORONER : Now I want you to think carefully before you

answer my next question. (*Pause.*) Have you any reason to suppose that there have been improper relations ?

[*There is a rustle of pleasurable anticipation in the Court.*

Milly : Well, I ask you. What else does a gentleman like him want with girls like us ?

[*A roar of applause from the* Crowd.

Voices of The Crowd : Ther dirty swine. That's 'im at the end of the row. Pleased with himself, ain't 'e ?

Coroner : I will not allow these interruptions. (*To* Milly.) Your friend was in love with Mr. Warlock ?

Milly : She was soppy about him. Used to sleep with his picture under her pillow. Once she bought a book of poetry. I warned her then what would be the end. And didn't I get a telling off ! But I was right. *As* she found out on Monday.

Coroner : What happened on Monday ?

Milly : He gave her the chuck. I'd been to the pictures. I came home and found her in her wet things lying on the bed. She told me it was all over.

Coroner (*writing*) : Monday, the seventh.

Milly : Wednesday evening she went out to see him. For the last time, she said. He never turned up.

Voices : What a shame ! I never ! The dirty swine !

Milly : I told her at breakfast next morning I was going to see Mr. J. W. That's how we quarrelled. Said she wouldn't have anything hurt him. Said she'd love him all her life. If I went to Montague Square she'd never speak to me again. (*Pause.*) She won't, either.

Coroner : Did you go ?

Milly : I left the flat in a temper. I went to the shop. At six o'clock I took the Baker Street bus. I told Mr. Jim what I thought of him.

Coroner : What attitude did he take ?

Milly : He ? He threatened to put the police on me !

Coroner : Have the Jury any questions to put to this witness ?

An Aged Juror : I should like to ask the young lady one rather delicate question. (*To* Milly.) I should like to ask if you knew of any trouble Miss Lea was in ?

Milly : Jim Warlock's trouble enough for any girl.

Aged Juror : You don't understand the point of my question. I will have to make myself clearer. Was Miss Lea expecting—er—to be a mother ?

Milly : Girls aren't as simple as they were in your day !

[*The* Crowd *laughs. The* Juror *sits down.*

Coroner : Turn that woman out. I will not have these interruptions. Any more questions ?

[*There is a respectful silence from the* Jury.

I see no one is anxious to ask this witness any further questions. Thank you, Miss Miles.

Milly : Thank you.

Coroner : Next witness. Mr. James Warlock.

[*There is a buzz of expectancy as* Jim *leaves his seat and crosses to the witness-box. While he is being sworn, voices are heard from the* Crowd.

Voices : That's 'im. That's the chap that did it. 'E don't look so bad. Ah, you can't judge by looks. Tell the 'ole truth, will yer ? Yer ought ter be in the dock.

Jim : I swear that the evidence I shall give touching this inquiry shall be the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Coroner : Your name ?

Jim : James Warlock.

Coroner : Profession ?

Jim : Barrister.

Coroner : You admit to knowing the deceased ?

Jim : Yes.

Coroner : Well ?

Jim : Yes.

Coroner : She was an attractive girl.

[Jim *is silent.*

What were your relations with her ?

JIM (*in a low voice*) : She was my mistress.

[*There is a hum of gratified comment.*

CORONER : Can you throw any light on the cause of her death ?

[JIM *does not answer.*

Was any action of yours calculated to make her take this desperate step ?

JIM : I had told her we could not go on meeting as we had.

CORONER : I see. How did she take your decision ?

JIM : She seemed to be—distressed.

CORONER : Indeed. Why did you terminate the relationship ?

JIM : I would rather not answer that question.

CORONER (*in a louder voice*) : Why did you terminate the relationship ?

JIM : Because of my wife.

CORONER : Oh ! So you're married !

JIM : Yes.

CORONER : Did the deceased know this ?

JIM : Yes.

CORONER : Perhaps you first told her so when you announced that you were leaving her ?

JIM : No.

CORONER : How old was the deceased ?

JIM : I don't know exactly.

CORONER : Really ! But you knew that she was quite young.

JIM : Yes.

CORONER : Did you not think that a married man who persuades a girl in her early twenties to enter into an illicit relationship, incurs a very heavy responsibility ?

[JIM *does not answer.*

Don't you think so ?

JIM : I think so now.

CORONER : A little late. You told the deceased on Monday

that you would have to give her up. And (*he picks up a letter*) according to your letter you arranged to see her on Wednesday at six ?

JIM : I said I would try.

CORONER : You broke the appointment ?

JIM : I had to take my wife somewhere. I failed to catch (*he jibs at the name*) Doris—on the telephone. I wrote that letter to explain.

CORONER : It was not delivered until, in despair, the girl had taken her life. You say you had to accompany your wife somewhere. At six in the evening ?

JIM : We were invited to a cocktail party.

CORONER : A cocktail party ! I don't think I need ask you any more questions.

[*The* FOREMAN OF THE JURY *springs to his feet.*

FOREMAN : I should like to inquire of the witness whether he is not a very wealthy man ?

JIM : No, I am not.

FOREMAN : Very comfortably off ?

JIM : Well ?

FOREMAN : Don't ask me questions. That's my job. Did you make any provision for the girl ?

JIM : I was trying to arrange something. It wasn't at all easy. I didn't want to hurt her feelings.

FOREMAN : You had shown yourself very careful of her feelings, hadn't you ?

[JIM *does not answer.*

The fact remains that at the time of the girl's death there was one and threepence in her purse.

[*He sits down. A* JURYWOMAN *gets up.*

JURYWOMAN : There's another point that ought to be cleared up. I am speaking as the mother of a young girl.

CORONER : Go on.

JURYWOMAN (*to* JIM) : When you met—when you took advantage of this—child, was she—a good girl ?

JIM : What does that mean ?

CORONER : The meaning is obvious. Had she—as far as you knew—had any similar relationship with anyone ?

JIM : Do I have to answer that ?

CORONER : You would be well advised to answer it. It is a question of some importance.

[*Silence.*

In the absence of any answer the jury will be bound to draw their own conclusions. You understand that ?

[*Pause.*

You prefer not to answer ?

[*Still silence.*

Very well.

[*The* JURYWOMAN *sits down.*

Any further questions ? You may stand down. (*He writes for a moment on the paper before him.*) That, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, concludes the list of witnesses I propose to call. I think their testimony has elucidated this deplorable case. You have been empanelled to return a verdict as to the manner in which Doris Lea met her death. In view of the very straightforward nature of the medical and police evidence, you will have no difficulty in deciding that point. You have then to consider the state of mind of the deceased when she took the fatal step. You have heard that she quarrelled with the girl she lived with. That she had lost her employment. That by an unfortunate chance a poisonous chemical was put into her hands. That she had no money. You have also heard that the married man on whom she had set her affections had recently broken off the guilty relation between them in a manner that I can only describe as brutal. I think you will have little doubt that there is to be found the deciding factor. Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, you will now consider your verdict.

[*The* JURY *consult. There is a hum of conversation from the Public.*

VOICE : I calls it murder.

ANOTHER VOICE : That's the verdict they ought to bring.

ANOTHER VOICE : Men like 'im ought to be 'ung.

A REPORTER : Mind you, she'll never beat Helen Wills !

A GIRL REPORTER : Helen's a little marvel.

A THIRD REPORTER : You've said it. But did you ever see Lenglen ?

[JOHN TRING *has come across the Court and stands by* JIM.

JIM *(looking up)* : You here ! Come to see me turned off ?

TRING : Nonsense.

JIM : You're not afraid of compromising yourself ?

TRING : What ? With this rabble ? My dear fellow. I thought you'd be glad of someone you knew being here.

JIM : Thanks.

TRING : How about your wife ?

JIM : She wanted to come. I wouldn't let her.

TRING : That's good—like her. She's a wise woman.

JIM : No, no—it's not that. She wanted to back me up, in public, you know, that's all.

TRING : Made any plans ?

JIM *(shaking his head)* : The Bar's finished, of course.

TRING : There are other things. We'll have a talk about that. How about dinner somewhere ?

JIM *(bitterly)* : Soho ?

[*The* JURY *are ready. The* FOREMAN *stands up.*

SERGEANT : Keep silence there !

CORONER : Have you considered your verdict ?

FOREMAN : We have.

CORONER : Are you unanimous ?

FOREMAN : We return an unanimous verdict on Doris Emily Lea of suicide.

CORONER : Deliberate suicide ?

FOREMAN : Yes.

CORONER : Felo-de-se.

FOREMAN : Suicide ; and we wish to add a rider expressing in the strongest terms our disgust at the conduct of Mr. Warlock.

CORONER : I entirely agree with the verdict and the rider. When a married man of mature years—

[*Here the lights begin to fade and the* CORONER'S *voice continues in the deepening darkness.*

—of excellent education and a good station in life entangles a young girl of an inferior class in an irregular union, quite apart from the breach of the moral law, he assumes a very grave responsibility. In addition to this, Mr. Warlock, by his refusal to answer an important leading question, has chosen to cast reflections on the previous character of this dead girl. The Jury have, I think, taken their own view of his attempt to screen himself by what is, in effect, an attack on the character of a girl who is no longer here to speak for herself. I do not think I need comment further on that. Mr. Warlock seems to have acted throughout with a levity as cynical as it has proved disastrous. If he had shown a little less selfishness, a little more restraint, a little more kindness, this unfortunate young woman would have been alive to-day.

[*The lights are up on the balcony in Capri as in the Prologue.*

EPILOGUE

EPILOGUE

SCENE : *The balcony of a private suite in a Capri hotel.*
TIME : *The same August afternoon as the Prologue.*
JIM *and* CLEMENCY *are sitting as they were when the lights faded out on the Prologue.*

JIM : That's what I hear every night. It goes on and on and on.

CLEMENCY (*looking up slowly*) : Then you weren't the first ?

JIM : No.

CLEMENCY : Why did you let them think you were ? They asked you.

JIM : I know.

CLEMENCY : That made a lot of difference, didn't it ? If the Coroner had known that—— ?

JIM : Yes. I suppose so.

CLEMENCY : Why didn't you say ?

JIM : I couldn't. It was her secret. She needn't have told me.

CLEMENCY : But if she hadn't told you ? It wouldn't have happened ?

JIM : Perhaps not. I don't know.

CLEMENCY : And you did that for someone you didn't really care for ?

JIM : I never said that. I did care. I don't want you to think that—that it didn't matter.

CLEMENCY : You're frank, aren't you ?

JIM : It's too late to be anything else. That's all I've got left now. That I don't have to lie about it.

CLEMENCY (*slowly*) : After I came back—were you together at all. To make love, I mean ?

JIM : No.

CLEMENCY : Why not ? Didn't you want to ?

JIM : I couldn't.

CLEMENCY : Because of me ?

JIM : Yes.

CLEMENCY : But you still wanted her. If I hadn't come back then—you'd have gone on ? Didn't you *ever* think of me when you were with her ?

JIM : Yes, I did.

CLEMENCY : But it didn't stop you ? (*Desperately.*) When you were kissing her ? Didn't you think then ? You say you loved me all the time.

JIM : I did. It made no difference to that.

CLEMENCY : No difference ! You *can't* mean that.

JIM : It's true, Clemency.

CLEMENCY : Supposing—when I came back—we'd made love—as you did with her. Would you have thought of her—while you were with me ?

JIM : I don't think so. You know, that sort of thing doesn't mean so much to men. Tring's right about that.

CLEMENCY : Then why were you giving her up, if it meant so little ? And for something that meant only that, you risked everything—everything we'd built up—our happiness. Didn't all that mean *anything* to you ?

JIM : It meant everything. It *does* mean everything. More than I knew. I've learnt that, anyway.

CLEMENCY : That horrible old man. And I thought him amusing. Things that make amusing conversation aren't so funny in one's own life.

JIM : I'm afraid it hasn't helped you much—my telling you.

CLEMENCY : Yes, it has. I'm glad to know.

JIM : If you could have seen her—perhaps. I think you'd have understood in a way——

[*A pause.*

CLEMENCY : I *did* see her.

JIM : What !

CLEMENCY : I went to look at her in the mortuary.

JIM : Clemency !

CLEMENCY : I thought I ought to see what she was like. I wanted to understand. I said I was a relation. In a way,

that seemed to be true. (*A pause.*) She was pretty. And so young.

[JIM *covers his face.*

It seemed so strange that *you* should have done that—you, so kind and gentle.

JIM : Kind—yes—that's just it. Well, that's all. (*He looks at her.*) I'll go down to the port, the afternoon boat's in. I'll see what's going on.

CLEMENCY : Yes. Thank you for telling me, Jim.

[*He looks at her almost eagerly.*

I'm glad I know.

[*He turns and goes. After a pause,* TRING'S *voice is heard from outside.*

TRING : May I come in ? Or rather, out ?

CLEMENCY : Who's that ?

TRING (*entering*) : I. I hope you notice the accuracy of my grammar.

[CLEMENCY *rises.*

I came on the afternoon boat. Did Warlock get my letter ?

CLEMENCY : This morning.

TRING : I was in Naples, on my way to Athens. I thought I'd look him up.

CLEMENCY : He's just gone out. I wonder you didn't see him.

TRING : I did. I let him go. I wanted to see you.

CLEMENCY : Oh ? I don't think we've much to say to each other. (*She turns her back.*)

TRING : I'm in disgrace. Mephistopheles. I was afraid of that. You think it was my fault ? Does he ?

CLEMENCY : No, he doesn't.

TRING : Well, he might, I *did* take him to Joseph's. I *did* speak to the girls. And, of course, I did nudge the laws of chance a bit about Epsom. Yes, so far as Fate ever has one eye open, I suppose I'm guilty.

CLEMENCY : Why did you do it ?

TRING : I suppose I thought it might be good for him.

CLEMENCY : And for me ?

TRING : I scarcely knew you. And he put me on my mettle —something he said.

CLEMENCY : Yes ?

TRING : He said he couldn't talk to girls like that—that he'd nothing in common with them. That's a dangerous thing to say of any fellow creature. No man should be as sure of himself as that. Mischievous of me, of course. But to offer a man a cocktail isn't to ask him to get drunk.

CLEMENCY : Perhaps you think it *has* been good for him.

TRING : Who can say ?

CLEMENCY : I can.

TRING : You think he's a worse man than he was ?

CLEMENCY : He's a different one.

TRING : Yes. He was a successful, honourable, upright Englishman. Now he's an outcast, a liar, a seducer of women. Also he's a man who has suffered. Isn't he more human ? I'd rather have him as he is now.

CLEMENCY : I suppose it doesn't matter that his career has gone ? That our whole life is smashed up ?

TRING : If you'd seen as many careers as I have, you wouldn't shed many tears over that. Is it such a privilege to spend your life in the sordid quarrels of other people ?

CLEMENCY : He liked it. And he'd have gone into politics.

TRING : To be dragged in chains at the rump of the mob—a leader of democracy ! Well, he can join the Labour Party. At least they've that much sense. *They* don't think that sexual morality is the measure of a good citizen.

CLEMENCY : You think it doesn't count, I know.

TRING : Well, would it be better if it counted less ? Nature thinks so. She doesn't worry about a little superfluous energy.

CLEMENCY : Is that the latest word for adultery ?

TRING : Oh—if you're going to bombard me with the Commandments ?

CLEMENCY : No. I'm not thinking about morality.

TRING : Thank God for that.

CLEMENCY : It's personal. I don't pretend it isn't. Something's gone. The thing that was us. I can't find it.

TRING : Don't take the senses too seriously. After all—between you and him—what did passion count for ?

CLEMENCY : It kept the rest alive.

TRING (*nodding*) : The yeast in the household bread. And unleavened bread is no good ?

CLEMENCY : Not to me.

TRING (*gently*) : It never touched his love for you.

CLEMENCY : That's where I'm lost. Supposing I'd done it—what would *he* have thought ? What *could* he have thought ? I *couldn't* do it, unless I'd changed to him.

TRING : Ah. There's the great gulf fixed. Monogamy is the woman's invention. Men don't really believe in it.

CLEMENCY : They believe in it for *us*.

TRING : Yes, you've talked them into it. Women capitalised chastity, and got us to subscribe for the shares. It's paid them well enough, too. Now the bottom's out of the market. Women don't like a man who isn't jealous. It brings monopoly value down with a run.

CLEMENCY : You think men *aren't* jealous ?

TRING : Not as women are. They've got a custom in the Balearic Islands. When several young men are courting the same girl they sit together outside the house—and they go in in turns—a fixed time for each. While they're waiting they have a friendly chat together. If one of them overstays his time, the others shoot him, otherwise there's no ill-feeling. We're reasonable creatures, so long as we get our share. And we're not jealous of the past—or how would all the widows get married again ?

CLEMENCY : The husband is dead.

TRING : Not always—nowadays. The divorcée does even better than the widow. The triumph of experience over chastity. Every new lover makes the next one more likely.

Seducing women is a damned nuisance. We've passed the time when a man wants to kill and cook his own dinner.

CLEMENCY : Yes, and if you'd said all this to me seven weeks ago, it would have quite amused me. I might even have agreed with you.

TRING (*gently*) : My dear, don't misunderstand me. I exaggerate, but I want to help you, if I can. Don't overestimate the significance of human actions. We eat because we're hungry—or greedy. We make love because we feel like it. And if we're healthy human beings it doesn't give us indigestion.

CLEMENCY : All of which means, I suppose, that I'm making a fuss about nothing.

TRING : No, not nothing, one feels as one can. But you think your Jim—the Jim you knew—couldn't have done this unless there'd been some moral cyclone. That's what is nonsense. A man's character doesn't change because of a casual love affair.

CLEMENCY : Casual ? A woman killed herself.

TRING (*irritably*) : Little fool !

CLEMENCY : A woman in love. The same thing, I suppose.

TRING : She broke the rules.

CLEMENCY : What are they ?

TRING : To play for the stake you've settled on. Women always want to change the stakes in the middle of the game. You can't raise a man ten pounds on a five shilling limit.

CLEMENCY : *I* didn't change the stakes.

TRING : No. You're in the right unequivocally. Doesn't that help ?

CLEMENCY : No. Argument's no good any more.

TRING : No. You've got to look here. (*Touching his breast.*)

CLEMENCY : Oh, I'm sorry enough. I'm terribly sorry for him. But pity isn't any good.

TRING : My God, no ! Try a little imagination.

CLEMENCY : Imagination ?

TRING : Suppose you weren't going to see him again ? Suppose he didn't come back ?

CLEMENCY : When ?

TRING : Now—this afternoon.

CLEMENCY : But he will come back.

TRING : *She* didn't.

CLEMENCY : Oh, but—oh, no—no—he wouldn't do that.

TRING : I don't suppose he would. He's not a coward.

CLEMENCY (*who has involuntarily moved to look out of the window*) : No, he isn't, is he ?

TRING : There are plenty of reasons why we never see people again. It's always happening. Just say it to yourself. " I shan't ever see him again. That's over." Say it.

CLEMENCY : No.

TRING : What would the world look like ? That's what you want to know.

[*There is a pause, then* JIM'S *voice.*

JIM : Hello, you *here*. Did you come on the boat ?

TRING : Yes, I must have just missed you. You got my letter ?

JIM : To-day. You've not lost much time.

TRING: I thought you might like to talk things over. Not that I can tell you much. I've not been there myself.

JIM : Can I be of any use there ?

TRING : Well, you'll have to find that out.

JIM : I can't even pot geraniums.

TRING : Geraniums grow there like weeds.

JIM : It tempts me. It's very good of you, Tring.

TRING : My dear fellow ! Well, when will you go ? You'll want to go back to London.

JIM : London ? What for ? Can't I get what I want out there ?

TRING : I should think so.

JIM : I should like to go at once.

TRING : Good. There's an Orient boat from Naples on

Sunday. You can pick up an East Coast boat at Port Said or Suez.

JIM : Sunday ? That'll do. You'll cable Thorburn I'm coming ?

TRING : Yes, He expects you. anyway.

JIM (*looking at him curiously*) : Does he ? (*He laughs a little bitterly.*) You're sure he won't mind ?

TRING : Why should he ? You won't alter the climate. The African sun is impervious to these great moral issues. It'll go on shining just the same.

JIM : You'll get me a berth ?

TRING : To Port Said ?

JIM : Yes, you'll want some money. Will you pay everything ? We'll settle later. (*He goes off to get the money.*)

TRING (*to* CLEMENCY) : So you won't need your imagination ?

CLEMENCY (*who has listened to the previous conversation as one who has been pushed out of a game*) : No.

JIM (*coming back*) : Here's five thousand lire. We can settle up later.

TRING : Yes, I shall see you off.

[*The boat's siren sounds.*

That gives me ten minutes. (*He takes up his hat.*) Till Sunday, then. You'll be over in the morning ? They may sail early. (*He turns to take* CLEMENCY'S *hand.*) I shall see you ?

CLEMENCY : Remember, we want an outside cabin—on the port side. It'll be hot.

TRING (*startled, then delighted*) : I'll remember.

[*He pats her hand, nods to* JIM, *and gets out.*

JIM : What do you mean ? You're not coming.

CLEMENCY : You don't want me ?

JIM : Why are you coming ?

CLEMENCY : I won't, if you don't want me to.

JIM : That's not it. You know all about that. You know whether I want you or not. It's this : What's done is done.

She's paid her bill, and I've paid mine—part of it ! I can't go on always being sorry, feeling there's something I ought to be ashamed of. I don't say it's easy for you to forget—I don't say it's possible—but if you can't, it isn't any good to me. And don't come with me because you're sorry for me—that's no good to me any more ! If you come, it must be because—well, not because I want you. It's got to be because you want me ! You understand ?

[*There is a pause.*

CLEMENCY : I understand. It's all right, Jim. (*She takes his hand.*) You needn't be afraid !

THE CURTAIN FALLS

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